ADDRESSING THE FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

A THESIS-PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF

GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

DAVID F. ROCKNESS

MAY 2016

To all who have invested themselves into my life, including FCC of Litchfield and

FPC of Mooresville…

Thank you for your love and encouragement.

To Dr. Arthurs…

Thank you for your patience and for knowing how to get the best out of me.

To Cassandra, Courtney, Kinnon, Kailie, Ciarra, and Karli…

Dad loves you all dearly.

To Jodi, my best friend and the love of my life…

Thank you for the many sacrifices and supporting me each step of the way.

To our great God…

May any use of this resource bring glory to Your name.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AA: Alcoholic Anonymous

CA: Communication Apprehension

PRPSA: Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety

ABSTRACT

This thesis-project addresses the fear of public speaking. It confirms there is a hidden group of men and women with great potential for Christian leadership who are perhaps missing their "calling" due to their deep-rooted fear of public speaking. Because Christian resources are scarce in this area, the thesis-project presents a booklet, written from a biblical perspective, specifically aimed at addressing this fear.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

A 12-year-old boy entered his home room on the first day of junior high school prepared to turn in a written summer assignment entitled, "My Summer Vacation." Although he felt confident about the quality of his work, he was thrown by an announcement from his new teacher. Everyone had to stand at the front of the class and read their written assignments to their peers. Presentations would begin on a volunteer basis and then move to random selection. The very thought of giving a speech pushed this young adolescent into panic mode—his heart began to race, negative thoughts consumed his mind, and he seriously considered making a beeline for the door. The longer he waited for his turn, the greater his anxiety became. Finally, the 12-year-old was called upon to present and just hearing his name announced produced an additional surge of adrenaline beyond anything he could properly manage. As he wobbled his way towards the podium, he could feel the eyes of his peers upon him. Although he made it through the reading, he was embarrassed by his trembling hands and quivering voice. A couple of giggling boys reinforced his feelings of shame. Little did he know at the time that his fear of public speaking would grow progressively stronger in high school and later in college. In fact, it would become a problem impacting choices he would make with regard to leadership opportunities, career ambition, and even having a receptive spirit when it came to God's potential "calling" in his life.

The Problem

Studies have shown that a strikingly high proportion of people in our culture view public speaking as their most significant fear. A commonly quoted statistic dating back to the early 1970s was that 41% of Americans place public speaking at the top of their "fear list" above heights, financial problems, and even death (Wallechinksky, Wallace and Wallace, 1977, pp. 469-470). One self-help organizer for stutterers wrote humorously as follows:

> When I first learned that public speaking was the thing people feared most, I was very surprised. I thought this to be true for those of us who stutter, but not for the public at large. I had always figured that the fear of death would top this list for most people. Upon reflection, however, I came up with three advantages that death has over speaking in front of a group of people. First of all, you are only going to die once, whereas, there is no limit to the number of times you can make a fool of yourself before an audience. Second, death is the best way I know to avoid speaking in front of a group. And, last, but not least, after you die, you do not have to walk back to your seat. (Horwitz, 2002, p.13)

A 2001 Gallup poll also revealed that 40% of Americans report public speaking as their most significant fear, ranking it second behind snakes (Brewer, 2001). James C. McCroskey, known for his prolific scholarship in the field of communication, developed a Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) to measure anxiety levels as they relate to public speaking situations (Daly, McCroskey, Ayres, Hopf, Ayres, Wongprasert, and Wongprasert, 2009). Drawing on decades of research, McCroskey reported that 70% of college students could be categorized as having high levels of anxiety about public

speaking—30% as "moderately high" and 40% as "very high" (Richmond, Wrench & McCroskey, 2013, p. 36). For those with moderately high anxiety (30%), the PRPSA data revealed that some speaking engagements may be manageable, yet most will be problematic. For the very high anxiety group (40%), analysis of the data revealed that most would go to considerable lengths to avoid public speaking and were unlikely to become successful public speakers unless something was done to help them overcome or significantly reduce their fear. McCroskey concluded, "What this suggests, then, is that it is 'normal' to experience a fairly high degree of anxiety about public speaking. Most people do. If you are highly anxious about public speaking, then you are 'normal'" (Richmond, et al., 2013, pp. 36-37). Clearly, the fear of public speaking is a problem shared by a significant number of people in our culture.

Distinctions

Our culture acknowledges this fear of public speaking through a variety of terms such as "stage fright," "performance anxiety," "speech anxiety," "gloss phobia," and "communication apprehension." Many of these terms suggest a problem larger than simply speaking in public before an audience. For example, communication apprehension (CA) is defined as "the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (Richmond, et al., 2013, p. 27). Broadly defined, a person with extreme forms of CA may avoid going to church, the mall, or a birthday party, due to the anxiety these everyday social interactions produce. In fact, they may avoid attempts to communicate with anyone except close relatives and friends (Mills & Samovar, 1986).

3

In researching CA, scholars wrestle with concepts and struggle to make distinctions such as the following:

> Singing apprehension is oral, but is it the same kind of communication as speech-making or conversation? What about actors reciting someone else's lines on a stage? How is that different from a memorized speech performance? Or someone reading his or her own manuscript? (Daly et al., 2009, p.12).

"Stage fright" is another term applied to the fear of public speaking that can connote a wider range of problems. Ivy Naistadt (2004) used this term interchangeably with "performance anxiety" to describe the fear she faced as a professional actor and singer. Although able to function well enough to achieve relative success on stage, she was unable to fully manage severe bouts of anxiety that limited her professional advancement and placed tension on her overall health. Naistadt believed that the same deep-rooted issues that plagued her with anxiety on Broadway, and in films and daytime soaps, were the type of issues that affect business professionals with public speaking responsibilities. She has now drawn on her "stage fright" experience to help clients in companies as large as IBM and the New York Times manage their public speaking "jitters" (p. 1, 15).

In the context of this thesis-project, all terms used to express the fear of public speaking will refer to, "anxiety associated with the act, or anticipation of the act, of making a public speech" (Mills and Samovar, 1986, p. 71). As one professor of communications straightforwardly stated, "We may as well face the issue squarely. Many people who converse easily in all kinds of everyday situations become frightened at the idea of standing up before a group to make a speech" (Lucas, 2009, p. 9)

4

Anticipation

Anxiety connected to the fear of public speaking often begins before the actual speech. A phrase as simple as "It is an honor for me to introduce" can trigger the waiting speaker to experience rapid heartbeat, butterflies, and wobbly knees. Persons caught off guard by this type of introduction may panic or even contemplate looking for the nearest exit. Public speaking guru, Dale Carnegie (2011), claimed to have received thousands of confessions similar to this:

> When I am called upon to stand and speak, I become so self-conscious, so frightened, that I can't think clearly, can't concentrate, can't remember what I had intended to say. I want to gain self-confidence, poise, and the ability to speak on my feet. I want to get my thoughts together in logical order and I want to be able to say clearly and convincingly before a business or club group or audience. (p. 1)

A Toastmasters group once asked a hundred men to describe their feelings before making a speech. It is notable that the men questioned were not novices. Many of them had spoken at a variety of occasions for years. A report of their responses revealed the following: "Their feelings ranged from almost petrification to an unfeeling numbness which caused their thoughts to be hazy and jumbled. Only three of the hundred told us that they felt a harmless kind of nervous excitement. This, then, is a major problem in public speaking" (Tack, 1973, p. 21). How can this be explained? What causes such a problematic response to something as simple as being introduced before a speech?

5

Cognitive Component

As the introduction to a speech takes place, the person placed in the spotlight is thrown into a potentially fear-inducing situation. All eyes are on the speaker who is processing his or her surroundings. Perceptions formed both consciously and unconsciously begin sending messages to the brain. Disturbing thoughts may begin to form: How will they receive me? Will they find me interesting? Will I be able to connect? What if they don't like me? What if I freeze or forget what to say? What if I say something stupid or make a fool of myself? Will they laugh? Will they think less of me? Some of the greatest fears reported by those who experience "stage fright" begin with thoughts of being judged, of forgetting, of embarrassment or failure, and with emotional memories of a bad past experience (Naistadt, 2004, p. 24). Therefore, just anticipating or thinking about a speech can trigger a biological fear response.

Biological Manifestations

A frightened student giving a speech in front of a class full of peers can display the same fear symptoms as a person confronting an elephant in the jungle. When the brain receives a sensory message of threat, whether real or perceived, the body's alarm system begins to activate. Adrenaline is pumped into the blood system, triggering dramatic increases in respiration, heart rate, and levels of perspiration on the surface of the skin. This is so the body can be mobilized to deal with the perceived threat. Oxygen-rich blood is quickly transported to large muscle groups such as the arms and legs. From this infusion a person can receive a surge of energy, explosive enough to jump over a 10 foot puddle or even lift a car (Grice and Skinner, 2010). Furthermore, the brain is told to stop other unnecessary actions such as salivating, so the body can focus on the perceived

hazard. Superhuman strength might be a helpful response when confronted by a bear in the wild, but the dry mouth that may accompany this strength is not the greatest asset for a speech. In relation to public speaking, this sudden activation of the body's alarm system may cause manifestations such as trembling arms, hands, and legs, shortness of breath, difficulty swallowing, tense muscles, and temporary memory loss. Excessive activation is when "anticipation of a performance continues to a point beyond an individual's ability to control it" (Richmond, et al., 2013, p. 92). In extreme cases of excessive activation, a person may experience embarrassing symptoms such as the regurgitation of meals, fainting, urinating, and in rare cases—a heart attack.

Behavioral Responses

For a person facing the fear of public speaking, the biological activation that comes from the perception of danger can lead to negative behavioral responses. Actions such as fidgeting, pacing, or playing with a pen are common behaviors for those fighting nerves. Emotions that are very real may include dread, frustration, hopelessness, and depression (Monarth & Kase, 2007). Although some with podium fear can channel their charged system for "fight," many become paralyzed or are overwhelmed when their radar calls for "flight." Janet E. Esposito (2000), a licensed clinical social worker from Connecticut, has revealed a strategy she used early in her career for dealing with her public speaking fears. She would arrange her schedule to avoid meetings and speaking engagements. Her "real panic" was in formal settings and unavoidable speaking engagements led to deep fear as she anticipated the inevitable for days, weeks, and months in advance. Esposito wrote, "I suffered alone with this fear and experienced a silent terror anytime I faced a situation where I had to speak" (p. 2).

Coping

Dealing with the fear of public speaking is a challenge. Yogis (2013) expressed it thus:

> Understanding fear changes our lives in extreme ways, but nobody ever teaches us about this basic, primal emotion. I don't recall a single lesson about fear from preschool up to graduate school. More importantly, most of us know very little about how to deal with fear when it stands in our way. (p. 1)

What are the effects for those ill-equipped to deal with the fear public of speaking? How does this fear stand in the way of a person achieving their potential?

The Problem in the Context of Christian Ministry

Studies have shown that the fear of public speaking can significantly limit a person socially, academically, and professionally. There is a significant difference between managing a case of the jitters before a public speaking engagement and learning to combat full-blown fear or panic. One study, based on 1998 Census data analyzed by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), estimates 5.3 million American adults aged between 18 and 54 have a social phobia and that those who suffer significant distress from the fear of public speaking or performance fall within this category (Esposito, 2000). In a telephone interview of 250 men and 250 women conducted in St. Louis, Missouri, 21% of participants revealed they had avoided certain public activities for fear of public embarrassment. An additional 21% admitted to having avoided public speaking for the same reason (Horwitz, 2002). Scholars in the field of communication, specifically focused on Communication Apprehension (CA), speak of "avoidance" as an external factor of CA. If a person is fearful of speaking in public, a common response is

8

to avoid public speaking situations. Although avoidance patterns may vary from person to person, experts have this to say about people with high levels of CA: "They will avoid classes that have required speeches and teachers who call upon students to answer questions in class. They will avoid occupations that require a high level of communication" (Richmond, Wrench & McCroskey, 2013, p. 42). If this is common behavior for those who fear public speaking, and up to 40% of college students have consistently tested as having "very high" levels of CA (p. 36), I have concerns about the implications this must have in the field of Christian ministry.

Based upon the above insights and studies, I believe that there is a hidden group of men and women with great potential for Christian leadership who are missing their potential "calling" due to their deep-rooted fear of public speaking. In fact, I can attest to avoidance patterns of those with "very high" levels of CA. I was the junior high student who perceived danger when my name was called in class to step forward for a speech. My biological alarm system would activate sweat glands, racing thoughts, and a severe bout of the shakes that could last for an entire presentation. Although "fight" was a behavioral response I learned to use to my advantage on the athletic field, "flight" became my coping mechanism for public speaking as my fear continued to grow in high school and college. This fear led me to avoid leadership positions that might require giving a formal speech or speaking in public. For example, in high school I refused to run for the Student Council because of the campaign speech required. I was happy to accept the role of Honor Society President, however, because it involved only a nomination and vote. Unfortunately, my Honor Society position led to a series of impromptu speaking disasters that prompted an internal vow to avoid any similar mishaps in the future. Thus,

9

when a deeply respected college professor suggested pastoral ministry as a potential "calling" for my life, fear of public speaking was my hidden reality as I gave an assortment of excuses as to why he was wrong. The excuses were my way of hiding the real issues and diverting any trace of the embarrassment and shame connected to my hidden fear.

Other influential people in my life have expressed similar experiences connected to their fear of public speaking. I am aware that my mother, a published author who had a passion for literature growing up, avoided going into higher levels of teaching due to her fear of public speaking. For those who have experienced her engaging personality, this comes as a shock. My former youth pastor, a very gifted communicator who spent a decade overseas as a missionary, avoided becoming a head pastor for years because of his fear of speaking in the pulpit. If over 40% of people in our culture identify public speaking as their greatest fear; if the communication scholars identify avoidance patterns as common for those with "very high" levels of CA; and if I can identify without much effort very gifted people who have avoided certain careers due to this fear, my concern is that there is also a significant group of potential Christian leaders who are unrecognized or hidden.

Furthermore, I believe that Christian colleges and seminaries have largely overlooked students who struggle with deep phobias in this area. I have taken several communication courses in Christian college and seminary and have no recollection of the fear of public speaking being addressed. I have completely blanked out in classroom settings due to symptoms of fear without a professor directly addressing my breakdown. I have surveyed hundreds of preaching books and have found nothing that addresses the

fear of public speaking. Fortunately, I have found sections of public speaking books or manuals that do address "communication apprehension" or "speech anxiety." However, even the books on public speaking written by Christian leaders are lacking in this category. For example, one Christian author, Litfin (1981), devotes two paragraphs to "stage fright" in a book of public speaking that is 350 pages in total (pp. 323-324). The tragedy is that gifted ministry candidates may be quietly slipping away without any direct encouragement or challenge to face their fear of public speaking. With this concern in mind, I created a research tool to survey current students in Christian colleges and seminaries. Results of this survey are presented in Chapter Four.

Research Question

In light of the identified problem and its effects, my research question is this: How can I help potential Christian leaders who fear public speaking overcome that fear? A related question is: How can we connect potential leaders with the right resources to help them address their fear of public speaking?

Thesis Statement

This question leads to my thesis: Potential Christian leaders who have a fear of public speaking can reduce or learn to manage their fear using insights gleaned from a booklet specifically devoted to addressing this fear.

Overview

Chapter Two

A biblical/theological framework supports the identified problem of the fear connected to public speaking. In essence, this framework ties together a theological

exploration of "fear" and shows how this fear relates to "ministry calling," "church leadership," and "preaching."

Chapter Three

A literature review informs the project with material from key sources of expertise on the subject. Books, articles, and periodicals are summarized to capture dialogue between pastors, theologians, public speaking experts, and scholars in the field of communication research. Theories and solutions offered by behavioral scientists and clinical psychologists for managing contextualized CA are considered alongside biblical revelation, theological insight, and practical guidance.

Chapter Four

The project design consists of four steps. The first step reports insights from research analysis helpful in providing a solution to the fear of public speaking. Most of this material is found in the literature review of Chapter Three.

Step two builds upon existing data through the development of a research tool created to survey current Christian college and seminary students. This additional research provides insight by contextualizing the fear of public speaking in relation to potential ministry candidates. College and seminary students with a fear of public speaking are able to anonymously describe the symptoms that accompany their fear; indicate how far they might go to avoid this fear; reveal their ability to recognize any root or understanding of their fear, and outline their perception of tools in place that may help them reduce or manage this fear.

Step three presents insights gained from semi-structured interviews conducted with Christian leaders who have learned to manage the fear of public speaking or are still

dealing with this fear. I report the solutions they recommend from personal experience as well as their assessment of the availability of tools and resources or lack thereof currently accessible for potential ministry candidates.

Step four presents a booklet created to address the fear of public speaking as well as details of the use of this booklet when conducting a seminar at my church in Mooresville, NC.

Chapter Five

Project outcomes are reported, including a vision of how I hope to connect students in Christian colleges and seminaries who have a fear of public speaking with the booklet that has been developed to help them manage this heavy challenge.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

When the great biblical leader, Moses, was addressed by Yahweh from the burning bush, Scripture recorded, "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God" (Exod 3:6).[1] This holy fear, appropriately expressed, set the stage for an exchange that revealed a less-than-noble range of expressions of human anxiety. Upon receiving a commission from God, Moses' first reaction revealed his fear through words that expressed doubtful inadequacy, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" (3:11) As the exchange continued, Moses shifted to voicing anticipatory concern, "What shall I say?" (3:13), and "But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me?" (4:1) Although the Lord provided tangible reassurance for each objection, Moses' anxiety levels continually increased through this divine dialogue. In fact, the terrifying thought of having to make a commissioned speech caused him to exclaim, "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (4:10). As the Lord remained firm in his assignment, Moses, with now unholy fear, begged, "O my Lord, please send someone else" (4:13).

Although the Lord is consistently faithful to equip those whom He calls to a task, many men and women of God can relate to the anxiety expressed by Moses. This chapter develops a biblical framework to address the problem of fear connected to public speaking. In essence, this framework consists of a theological exploration of *fear*, and shows how fear relates to *ministry calling*, *church leadership*, and *preaching*. These

---

[1] All Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version, 1989, unless otherwise noted.

14

elements are brought together to address the fear of public speaking as well as provide insight towards recognizing the potential of a missed ministry call.

Theology of "Fear"

What does the Bible mean when it speaks of "fear"? Is fear always a negative quality? How do biblical figures relate and respond to fear? This section begins by presenting biblical terms and their nuances for the concept of fear. After exploring Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek, the focus shifts towards examining how fear has been exemplified, both negatively and positively, in biblical figures. Finally, theological implications relevant to those who struggle with a fear of public speaking are presented.

Old Testament

The most commonly-used term for fear in biblical Hebrew is *yare.* This can also be translated as "terror," "be afraid," or "worship." Negatively, fear is expressed as a raw emotion that is often attached to wickedness and sin and that can cripple a God-fearing person. This term dates back to the "Fall" of humankind, when fear as a result of sin is mentioned in the context of the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:10). The Book of Proverbs contains an observation about a fearful paranoia that distinguishes sinners from the righteous: "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion (Prov 28:1). And although David may have had legitimate reason to fear his enemy in certain situations, the crippling effect of this anxiety was striking when he cried out, "Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me" (Ps 55:5). The Lord warned against being consumed by such fear, and provided this perspective: "Do not call conspiracy all that this people call conspiracy, and do not fear what it fears, or be in dread. For the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let

15

him be your dread" (Isa 8:12-13). William Mounce distinguished contrasting nuances to this Old Testament concept of fear when he stated, "The polarity of this term is vividly demonstrated in Jonah 1, where the *terror* of the sailors (Jonah 1:5,10) turns to *worship* after the storm is calmed (v. 16)" (Mounce, 2006, p. 244). Much of this distinction has to do with the object of fear and how a person relates to this object.

In a more positive light, fear can be appropriate when the source of this emotion is holy or when the response leads to proper conduct. John Calvin has stated that the knowledge of God "should serve first to teach us fear and reverence." He continued by showing how the two sides of fear could effectively work together: "Here indeed is pure and real religion: faith so joined with an earnest fear of God that this fear also embraces willing reverence, and carries with it such legitimate worship as is prescribed in the law" (Cited in Kerr, 1989, pp. 19-20). Consistent with this insight, the Pentateuch firmly established the Lord as the appropriate source of all fear: "The Lord your God you shall follow, him alone you shall fear, his commandments you shall keep, his voice you shall obey, him you shall serve, and to him you shall hold fast" (Deut 13:4). Words of wisdom from the Book of Proverbs have affirmed "the fear of the Lord" as "the beginning of knowledge" (1:7) and a "fountain of life" (14:27). The Psalmist emphasized the value of holy fear, declaring, "O fear the Lord, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want" (Ps 34:9). Not only has Scripture established the Lord as the appropriate source of all fear, but it also reflects the desire that God's people respond to this awe-inspiring fear with proper conduct. When the question was raised, "What does the Lord require of you [Israel]?" the response found in the book of Deuteronomy was as follows: "Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with

16

all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord your

God and his decrees" (Deut 10:12-13). The writer of Ecclesiastes commended this

holiness of conduct and concluded with, "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for

that is the whole duty of everyone" (12:13). And one of the most powerful expressions of

appropriate fear was a description given by the prophet Isaiah of the future messiah with

these words: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and

understanding, the spirit of counsel and insight, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of

the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord" (Isa 11:2-3). These Old Testament

terms for fear with their contrasting nuances can be found in New Testament Greek as

well.

New Testament

Terms used for fear in biblical Greek are *phobeomai* (verb) and *phobos* (noun).

Similar to the terms used in the Old Testament, they convey both the sense of "terror and

alarm" and "reverence and awe." The concept of how to properly relate to fear has been

further clarified through the teachings of Jesus and his apostles. Jesus presented insights

at teachable moments in his ministry. For example, when followers were conflicted by

cultural and heavenly pressures that could create a sense of alarm, Jesus taught, "Do not

fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both

soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:28). When the disciples were terrified by a storm on the

Sea of Galilee, Jesus reprimanded them for allowing their emotions to take over and for

not trusting that God was in control (8:36). However, Jesus graciously calmed the storm

and produced in his followers a godly sense of fear or awe that could help them gain a

deeper understanding of God's presence and power in their lives. J.I. Packer (1993) has

17

provided insight about reverent fear connected to knowing Jesus. He wrote of Jesus as the master who "evoked in them [disciples] increasing awe and devotion till they could not but acknowledge him as their God, found them, called them to himself, took them into his confidence and enrolled them as agents to declare the world the kingdom of God" (p. 37). And one of the most comforting messages shared by Jesus is attached to his promise of the Holy Spirit who would accompany his disciples when he returned to his father in heaven. He sensed an anxiety in their hearts that could lead to fear and offered them these words: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27).

The apostles offered additional insight on how to appropriately relate to the concept of fear. When Luke affirmed Jesus' view of proper fear towards God (Acts 9:31), he also emphasized appropriate fear attached to God working through people. For example, he recorded that in the early church, "Awe [fear] came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles" (Acts 2:43). The apostle Paul not only expressed how proper fear towards God brings holiness (2 Cor 7:1), but that awareness of God's hand in people's lives should be worked out in a reverent way "with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). The author of Hebrews, most likely an early church leader, taught how faith is instrumental in conquering fear. He emphasized the promise made by Jesus that "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Heb 13:5) to remind believers that it can be said with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" (13:6) And John not only defined God as love (1 John 4:8), but offered God's love as the solution for dealing with an unhealthy sense of fear when he stated, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (4:18).

18

Biblical Figures

A proper understanding of fear was not only taught in Scripture, but was modeled there as well. Fear was demonstrated, both negatively and positively, in the lives of Old and New Testament individuals. Negatively, fear was shown to consume or overwhelm. When Adam and Eve first sinned, they were so terrified that they hid from God in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8-10). When King Saul, who had turned his back on the Lord, saw the Philistine army, "he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly" (1 Sam 28:5). Later, as Samuel conveyed to Saul a sobering future because of his disobedience to the Lord, it is written, "Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of the words of Samuel" (28:20). In the New Testament, Pilate was overwhelmed by his haunting dilemma and was described as "more afraid than ever" with regard to the demands made by the crowd towards Jesus (John 19:8).

More positively, fear was embraced by biblical figures in a way that could lead to a spirit of worship and transformation of the heart. Walter Kaiser (1991) has provided insight into Old Testament accounts of fear: "If announced positively, then, fearing the Lord was turning to God in a life of faith and trust" (p. 67). King David, described by Scripture as "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22), demonstrated how personal weakness and fear could be transformed into worship by a strong relationship with the Lord. In the midst of his conflict with the mighty Philistines, he uttered a word of praise to the Lord, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can flesh do to me?" (Ps 56:3-4). Cornelius, the Gentile centurion, was described by Luke as "a devout man who feared God with all his household" (Acts 10:2). At a stage in which he had not yet been introduced to the Gospel

of Jesus Christ, the centurion was still considered by Luke "an upright and God-fearing man" (10:22). Later, when Cornelius summoned the apostle Peter in response to a miraculous vision, he and a group of Gentiles were recipients of a Christ-centered sermon (10:33). Peter emphasized that "in every nation anyone who fears him [God] and does what is right is acceptable to him" (10:35). As Peter continued to preach, the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentile group (10:45), transforming their hearts, and they were all baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (10:48). Since scripture has taught and exemplified how fear should be appropriately embraced, those with a fear of public speaking can draw from these biblical insights.

Theological Implications

Although the fear of public speaking may cause most people with this struggle to avoid it at all costs, this primal emotion can lead towards a greater reliance on God, a strengthening of personal faith, and an opportunity for transformed living. For a person who fears public speaking, giving this fear over to the Lord is a tremendous step of trust. It means putting fear in its proper place. The mind might say that the audience is hostile, the crowds will laugh, or the congregation does not respect the presenter. Real or perceived, the opinion or response of others should not affect one's security in speaking. A godly proverb stated, "The fear of others lays a snare, but one who trusts in the Lord is secure" (Prov 29:25). God should be the starting point for any battle. King David, a great military leader, cried out, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear." (Ps 46:1). Although the fear and trembling accompanying a speech may seem trivial in comparison to military conflict, the battle of mind and heart is real and can be crippling to a person's potential. Therefore, it is not inappropriate to place

this type of battle before the Lord and embrace His promise amidst the conflict: "Do not lose heart, or be afraid, or panic or be in dread…the Lord your God goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies" (Deut 20:3-4). To give one's fear to the Lord, to place full reliance in his security, is an act of trust that can also lead to a strengthening of faith.

A person who begins to rely more upon God to face the fear of public speaking can find greater strength of faith by awareness of his presence. The prophet Isaiah provided a picture of eagle-like vision and renewed strength found in the Lord for his people. As a mouthpiece for God, he gave assurance of God's presence when he stated, "Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand" (Isa 41:10). In his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ, God in human form, showed great patience with his disciples by helping them to conquer all sorts of fears through the tangible assurance of his presence. The disciples were not always quick to recognize him. As Jesus once approached them by miraculously walking on water, he was able to calm their terror by assuring them with these words, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid" (Matt 14:27). Even in Jesus' presence, the disciples sometimes needed a lesson to place the cause of their fear in proper perspective. For example, when caught together in a great storm, Jesus sternly said to the disciples, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" (Mark 4:40) He was urging them to trust that God was in control. When Jesus miraculously calmed the storm, his disciples could suddenly see the power of God in his presence. This shifted the disciples' attitude of unhealthy fear to one of reverent fear and awe of a powerful figure who could cause even the wind and sea to obey him (4:38-41). Although Jesus is

21

no longer present on earth in human form, he remains faithful to the promise of his presence through this gift of God's Holy Spirit (John 14:15-31) who provides the believer with a greater strength of faith to face life's fears and challenges (Acts 1:8).

As a believer relies more upon God and finds increased strength of faith through the power of his presence, he or she can potentially view the fear of public speaking as an opportunity to experience godly transformation. John Stott (1982) emphasized human weakness as a key ingredient for humility and dependence on God. He cited several examples in the writings of the apostle Paul and then shared insights into the way God used weakness in the ministry of Paul: "In these cases human weakness was deliberately permitted to continue, in order to be the medium through which divine power could operate and the arena in which it could be displayed" (p. 331). Although people who develop weak knees at the thought of giving a speech might plead with the Lord to take away their fear, they, like the apostle Paul, might find God at work in their ministry through this biblical insight: "'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Cor 12:9). As the apostle Paul so eloquently articulated, any believer, regardless of the fear, can confidently exclaim, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13). In addressing the fear of public speaking, this biblical understanding of fear can be shown to relate to ministry calling, church leadership, and preaching.

Fear in Relation to Ministry Calling

What is a ministry calling? How does it relate to a salvation call? And in what ways might fear affect a person's response towards a particular prompting from God?

22

This section explores the biblical concept of a ministry calling, examines the responses of two biblical figures, and provides biblical implications for those who may be wrestling with promptings from the Lord towards potential ministry callings.

Biblical Concept of a "Call"

A biblical understanding of a ministry calling can bring additional insight when addressing the fear of public speaking. For if a believer understands the nuances of God's calling in their lives, they can better respond in faith to the desires of God's heart. First, it is important to make a distinction between two different types of calling. Hudson Armerding (1992), the former president of Wheaton College, did so this way:

> Divine calling is one of the major themes of the Bible. Probably the best known aspect of this teaching relates to our salvation. Not as well-known but nevertheless very significant is the fact that God also calls us to special service or ministry for Him. Most Christians would agree that such a calling applies to those summoned by God to be ministers or missionaries, but the Biblical teaching is more comprehensive. (p. 43)

In other words, he believed the Bible provided insight into Divine calling that could relate to both *salvation* and *ministry* or *service* to God in a variety of ways. Os Guinness (2003) distinguished between salvation and ministry callings through the language of *primary* and *secondary* callings. He stated, "Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him and for him" and "Our secondary calling, considering who God is as Sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live and act entirely for him" (p. 31). Although he made a strong distinction between salvation and

23

ministry callings, Guinness was adamant about how strongly these two aspects work together:

> We can therefore properly say as a matter of secondary calling that we are called to homemaking or to the practice of law or to art history. But those and other things are always the secondary, never the primary calling. They are "callings" rather than the "calling." They are our personal answer to God's address, our response to God's summons. Secondary callings matter, but only because primary calling matters most. (p. 31)

In the *Institutes*, John Calvin defined the salvation side of a calling as an *effectual calling*. He stated, "There is the general call, by which God invites all equally to himself through the actual preaching of the word." This would include those who might not respond to the Gospel message. In addition, Calvin stressed, "The other kind of call is special, which he [God] deigns for the most part to give to the believers alone, while by inward illumination of his Spirit he causes the preached word to dwell in their hearts" (cited in Kerr, 1989, p. 119). Both general and special callings are categorized within what Calvin called an effectual calling to salvation. Calvin also addressed the ministry side of a Divine calling in a section entitled "Rules for Christian Living." Here he emphasized that "The Lord bids each one of us in all life's action to look to his calling" and then stated more specifically, "He [God] has appointed duties for every man in his particular way of life. And that no one may thoughtlessly transgress his limits, he has named various kinds of living 'callings'" (p. 99). Salvation and ministry callings were both also addressed in the Westminster Confession, which spoke of an effectual calling as "being called by God's Word and Spirit out of sin and death to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ" (Book

of Confessions, 1996, p. 186). As to a ministry calling, it is written of the Holy Spirit in the Confessions: "He calls and anoints ministers for their holy office, qualifies all other officers in the Church for their special work, and imparts various gifts and graces to its members" (p. 213). Although much more could be said about a primary or effectual calling to salvation, the focus of relating the fear of public speaking to a call will be placed specifically on the idea of a secondary calling or on being summoned to ministry in Christ.

The concept of a ministry calling is present in the Old Testament. The Hebrew term for calling is *qara.* This term was often used in connection with God calling various individuals to a task or service. The Lord conveyed this concept through the prophet Isaiah as follows: "Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many" (Isa 51:2). The first chapter of Numbers has identified a string of men who were "appointed" or literally "called" to assist Moses as leaders of each tribe of Israel (Num 1:5-15). The prophet Isaiah revealed his own ministry "calling" through this testimony: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me'" (Isa 6:8). Interestingly, not all called upon in the Old Testament responded so willingly. For example, Jonah's first response to God's call to speak a difficult message to the wicked city of Nineveh was to flee in the opposite direction (Jon 1:1-3). Jonah eventually learned the hard way not to disobey God, enduring a raging storm as well as time for deep "guttural" thinking, before finally acquiescing to the call that had been placed upon him (3:3).

The New Testament has provided additional insights that build upon the concept of a ministry call and that help address the fear of public speaking. The most common Greek terms for call or calling are *kaleo* (verb) and *proskaleo* (verb). *Kaleo* is significant in that its use was always connected to God or Jesus doing the calling. For example, the Gospel of Matthew first affirmed the call of God upon the ministry of God's begotten Son (Matt 2:15) before Jesus then began to place a call upon the lives of his disciples (4:21). His first disciples were shown to have been given an invitation before obediently responding (Matt 4:22; Mark 4:20). *Proskaleo* was a term used to mean "summon" or "call to a task." Mark's Gospel used this term to record how Jesus called the twelve disciples to a specific task of itinerant preaching by stating , "He [Jesus] called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits…So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them" (Mark 6:7, 12-13). Also, Jesus emphasized in his teaching that a call was an invitation that required a response. He conveyed this in his parable of the wedding banquet in which many of the "invited" rejected the invitation (Matt 22:1-14). Jesus concluded with a strong remark: "For many are called, but few are chosen" (22:14). Although this parable seems to convey eternal aspects of a salvation call, there are implications for obedience that cannot be ignored. When called upon, whether towards a task or salvation, the only appropriate response is to obey. The apostle Paul emphasized his obedience to a call to be a "servant" and "apostle" of Christ Jesus (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1) as well as the call for which all believers are responsible in regard to both "salvation" and "service" (1 Cor 7:15; Eph 4:1,4; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:7; 1 Tim 6:12; 1 Pet 2:21). With this sense of calling in mind, there

26

are biblical examples of those called to public speaking who wrestled with or quivered at such a task.

Ministry Calling of Moses

Moses received a clear calling from God that demanded he face his fear of public speaking. Among many perceived weaknesses and inadequacies, this great chosen leader seemed to lack confidence in his ability to speak and was trying to pass the buck to somebody else when he exclaimed: "Here I am Lord, please send someone else, anyone else" (Exod 3:4; 4:13). The Lord responded firmly with this message: "Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak" (4:11-12). As Moses persisted in his resistance, he met with anger from the Lord who patiently equipped him with an assistant, Aaron, to help him move forward with this ministry call. Feeling inadequate and weak, Moses eventually did move forward in obedience, equipped with God's blessing and power to pursue God's stated purpose and tasks.

Ministry Calling of the Apostle Paul

Paul received a clear calling from God to be set apart as an apostle of Jesus by the will of God (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1). In his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul expressed "weakness, fear, and trembling" associated with his proclamation of the Gospel message (1 Cor 2:3-4). The term used for trembling was *tromos,* which conveyed a connection to performing a duty, in his case proclaiming Christ crucified, and can be translated "anxious conscientiousness." Why would this ministry calling have created such fearful anxiety? And how did Paul deal with this fear associated with a public proclamation of Jesus Christ?

27

The fearful anxiety connected to Paul's proclamation of the Gospel was created by a variety of factors. First, Paul was aware of his own limitations in speaking. His letters emphasized weaknesses such as physical infirmities (2 Cor 12:7), untrained speech (11:6), and a lack of eloquent persuasiveness in his approach (1 Cor 1:17; 2:1). Secondly, Paul was very conscious of those who criticized his preaching skills and ministry. Luke has recorded that some of the philosophers that debated with him in Athens regarded him as a "babbler" and that there was a segment of people who "scoffed" at the content of his message (Acts 17:18, 32). Also, Paul acknowledged a group of false teachers in Corinth who mocked him with these words, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor 10:10). A third factor creating anxiety may have been the many hardships he faced in connection with public speaking endeavors. He was beaten and imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:19-24), fled from a mob in Thessalonica (17:5-10), and was forced to depart from Berea (17:13-15)—all because audiences were incited by his public proclamation of Jesus. Although Paul was boldly faithful in fulfilling God's assigned tasks, he would have had every reason to express fear and trepidation as he approached each new venture. Therefore, Paul needed help in addressing the anxiety connected to public speaking.

Paul drew upon several spiritual realities to boldly address any fear connected to his ministry calling to preach. First, he was able to draw on a supernatural vision from God. Luke has recorded that the Lord spoke to Paul in Corinth with these words, "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you" (Luke 18:9-10). Although Paul expressed fear and trepidation, his actions spoke louder than words as he was faithful to God's promptings and trusted that

God was in control. Secondly, Paul was able to rest upon the power of the Gospel message. He therefore embraced his limitations and boldly stated that his approach to speaking did not rely on his own human wisdom but rather on "a demonstration of the Spirit" and "the power of God" (1 Cor 2:4-5). A third spiritual reality Paul embraced was his consciousness of drawing boldness from an audience of one. Paul stated that in his preaching ministry he was not out too people-please, but rather was motivated as a servant of Christ to seek God's approval (Gal 1:10). In fact, he called out a segment of his critics by declaring, "But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves by one another they do not show good sense" (2 Cor 10:12). "For it is not those who commend themselves that are approved, but those whom the Lord commends" (10: 18). Lastly, Paul was able to find contentment in weakness for the sake of Christ through the power of God. He wrote that God revealed to him that such power is made perfect in weakness (12:9) and stated boldly, despite his "thorn in the flesh," that "for whenever I am weak, then I am strong." Such insights can give strength to those who may struggle or wrestle with a ministry call that may create a sense of trembling or fear.

Theological Implications

Those with a fear of public speaking who understand the biblical concept of a ministry "call" must not ignore the prompting of the Lord that might take them outside of their comfort zone. William Willimon (2000) gave this insight in regard to God's ministry call upon Moses:

Moses protests. He is not good at public speaking. He has baggage. Yet Moses finds what succeeding generations found. Once comes the call to service, it is

29

futile to wrestle with God. Once God has got in God's mind that someone is a leader, one might as well relent with deferential, 'Here am I, send me." (p.16) What about those who have difficulty discerning God's call upon their lives? How might such a calling be determined? Os Guinness (2003) has provided insightful advice for discerning a ministry call from God. He stated that some ministry calls were easily grasped through "direct, specific, supernatural communication from God." Guinness referred to this a *special* call (p. 48). More common was the person who received no direct communication, yet responded to God's primary calling upon their lives to follow Christ with a sense of "life-purpose and life-task." This he referred to as an "*ordinary* calling." He believed this distinction carried with it very practical consequences:

> Many Christians make the mistake of elevating a special calling or of talking as if everyone needed a special call for every task. ("Were you called to this job?") Some use the word *calling* piously regarding all their decisions, thinking it is the word to use, when in fact they have not had any special call. To the surprise of both groups, there is not a single instance in the New Testament of God's special call to anyone into a paid occupation or into the role of a religious professional. Others feel that without a special call, they have had no call at all. So they wait around for guidance and become passive, excusing themselves by saying they have had "no call." But all they are doing is confusing the two types of call and burying their real talent in the napkin in the ground. (p. 49)

Whether special or ordinary, the Lord in his calling desires a spirit of humility and trust.

He expects a positive response, regardless of fears or objections; anything else is disobedience. Although a person with this fear may feel inadequate or weak, the apostle Paul put any ministry call in perspective, primary or secondary, special or ordinary, when he stated:

> Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. (1 Cor 1:26-29)

In other words, just as God addressed all the inadequacies Moses perceived in himself in facing Pharaoh, so too God is faithful to equip all ministry callings with the tools necessary to accomplish his purposes for his glory. If the concern is related to public speaking, the Lord can use those who may feel foolish and weak to demonstrate his mighty wisdom and power. Not all ministry callings are found by taking a spiritual gifts test and picking out the area of ministry that feels most fitting or comfortable. As Calvin once stated, "We are not our own: let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh" (Cited in Kerr, 1989, p. 93). Therefore, those who seek out a vocational calling in accordance with the voice of the Lord may find themselves stretched uncomfortably beyond their comfort zone and truly reliant on him in order to face perceived dangers and fears. In the same way that fear of public speaking can affect a ministry calling, the issue can affect church leadership as well.

31

Fear in Relation to Church Leadership

In what way is speech necessary for those in church leadership? How has God ordained that leaders lead? How might fear interfere with a person's effectiveness as a leader? In connecting the fear of public speaking to church leadership, this section begins with a brief overview of biblical leadership. After establishing God as the authoritative source of all leadership, the focus shifts to outlining and exploring God's expectations about speech as these affect church leaders. Attention is also given to how the apostle Paul embraced challenging aspects of church leadership and passed wisdom on to his young protégé Timothy. Finally, theological implications of biblical insight will be presented to challenge those with a fear of public speaking in relation to church leadership.

Biblical Concept of a "Leader"

A scriptural understanding of leadership provides further insight for addressing the fear of public speaking. In the Old Testament, the Lord is the ultimate source of authority, and the one who authorizes the exercise of leadership. This structure appears as early as the first chapter of Genesis, where humankind are given dominion over the creatures of creation (Gen 1:26). The Lord is then recorded distributing leadership authority progressively to the patriarchs (Gen 12), tribal chiefs (36:15-42), prophets, judges, and kings. The Lord ordained the establishment of a worldly monarch (1 Sam 8), was described by the prophet Isaiah as "the King of Israel" (Isa 44:6), and by the psalmist as "the Most High…a great king over all the earth" (Ps 47:2). Although culture has placed much value on the role of an earthly king, "the cultural concept of leadership was never intended to replace the ideal of a nation under a God who acted through every

32

community to carry out the divine will" (Richards, 1991, p. 401). The Lord also bestowed prophetic visions of a messianic ruler from the line of King David who would eventually shepherd the flock of Israel (Ezek 34:23-24). This divine leader, identified in the New Testament as Jesus Christ, would rise up like a "king" (Dan 8:23-25) and establish himself upon the throne of God's everlasting Kingdom (Isa 9:6-7).

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is established by God as the leader of a living organism called the church. He is considered the sole "head" over every part of his "body" that made up the church (Eph 1:22-23). Within this fellowship, Jesus designated leadership authority "that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12). Jesus embraced the term "shepherd" to designate his approach to leadership (John 10:11) and desired those who sought greatness to submit to a more humble style of leadership (Matt 20:25-28). Jesus commissioned the apostle Peter as a church leader to take care of his sheep (John 21:15-17). Likewise, the apostle Paul gave a charge to the elders of Ephesus to "shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son" (Acts 20:28). In his *Institutes*, Calvin made a point of emphasizing that church leadership had been ordained by God and provided this strong statement with regard to speech:

> Nevertheless, because he [God] does not dwell among us in visible presence [Matt. 26:11], we have said that he uses the ministry of men to declare openly his will to us by mouth, as a sort of delegated work, not by transferring to them his right and honor, but only that through their mouths he may do his own work—just as a workman uses a tool to do his work. (Cited in Kerr, 1989, p. 138)

33

Again, God is the ultimate source of authority for all leadership and has ordained human leaders to serve within the living organism of the church that has been firmly established upon the Lordship of Christ Jesus. With this basic understanding of biblical leadership in mind, expectations on church leaders involving speech are now identified.

The Necessity of Speech for Church Leaders

The New Testament has outlined several qualifications essential for a church leader, including expectations involving speech. Among these expectations are the responsibilities to teach, tend the flock, and demonstrate boldness of faith. Anyone called to be an elder or overseer is to be "an apt teacher" (1 Tim 3:2) and is told to hold to the standard of sound doctrine taught by the apostles (2 Tim 1:13). Additionally, elders are to "tend the flock" (Acts 20:28), which includes the nourishment and protection of God's sheep. This can be done by speech with a "firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9). For example, Paul demonstrated in his letter to the church in Thessalonica how he and his ministry team were entrusted with the task of communicating the gospel message with purity, and that like a nurse "tenderly caring for her own children" they taught and modeled their faith in a way that conveyed a shepherd's heart (1 Thess 2:4-8). Lastly, boldness is critical for church leaders entrusted with the responsibility of teaching and preaching. The Greek term *parresia,* which can be translated "boldness" or "confidence," was used in the New Testament mostly in connection with speech. The apostle Paul asked for prayer in connection with his proclamation of the gospel: "Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak" (Phil 6:19) and was said to have been known for "teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all

boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28:31). Although this may not seem to have come naturally for some, the early church modeled dynamic faith by praying for boldness within the context of persecution, and it is reported that "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:23-31). Further insight into being bold with the responsibility of speech has been provided through the relationship of the apostle Paul and the young pastor Timothy.

The Apostle Paul and His Young Protégé

The apostle Paul demonstrated boldness in speech as a church leader and was committed to passing this quality along to the younger generation for effectiveness in leadership. He modeled his ministry after the leadership example of Christ and trained others to do so as well (1 Cor 4:16-17). For example, Paul reminded the young pastor Timothy of all that had been modeled to him in teaching, conduct, and faith and then stated, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it (2 Tim 3:14). Leadership demands on Paul led him to address a divided church in Corinth, despite fearing how he might be received. As mentioned earlier, he revealed boldness of leadership in his willingness to speak a difficult message: "I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling" (1 Cor 2:3). Aware of comparisons being made between his speaking style and that of the more eloquent Apollos, Paul resisted the human tendency to entertain such critiques. Instead he expressed partnership with Apollos in communicating the Gospel message and attributed any responses to their ministry to the life-changing power of God. What Paul stressed in essence was this: "It is not about the messenger, but about the one who has the power to change lives" (1 Cor 3:1-9).

Paul demonstrated strength of leadership in mentoring other pastors who would inevitably face similar challenges. For example, Paul recognized that Timothy would have leadership challenges due to his youth. He offered constructive advice when urging his young protégé not to "let anyone look down on you because you are young" (1 Tim 4:12). This encouragement included the need for boldness in speech and the reminder that Timothy's responsibilities included the public reading of Scripture, preaching, and teaching, all gifts affirmed by the laying on of hands by the body of elders in the church (1 Tim 4:12-14). Paul closed the letter by exhorting Timothy to "fight the good fight" to which he was called, and to "guard what has been entrusted to you" (6:12, 20). Paul's intention was to encourage this young church pastor not only to strength of faith, but to courage of speech and effectiveness as a leader.

Theological Implications

A person with a fear of public speaking who understands the biblical concept of ministry call and is responsive to the demands of church leadership, must learn to face ministry situations that create high levels of anxiety. Most church leaders have speaking responsibilities attached to their calling and need to recognize that ministry is more about the message than it is about the messenger. Although a church leader may fear how God's message will be received, or anticipate the crushing blow of negative feedback, he or she can find solace in these words of Paul: "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us" (2 Cor 4:7). Also, church leaders must remember that God is the ultimate source of authority and that Christ is the head of the church. Their authorization, combined with the empowering gift of the Holy Spirit, should carry with it a sense of divine perspective and

36

boldness. In the same way that the apostle Paul refused to entertain preaching comparisons, and Timothy overcame challenges of inexperience and youth, all church leaders need to resist the temptation to listen to the voices that may discourage aspects of their leadership calling, including expectations about public speaking. One of the most intimidating prospects for a person who struggles with the fear of public speaking, yet is called to church leadership, would be embracing the responsibility of preaching.

Fear in Relation to Preaching

What does it mean to preach? How essential is preaching to the Christian faith? Why might a pastor risk criticism or hostility concerning their preaching? These questions are explored in this final section which offers biblical insight on the terms for preaching, makes a case for the priority of preaching, and examines biblical preachers who demonstrated faithfulness in proclaiming the Gospel message despite having reason to be fearful. The final section of *theological implications* pulls together the various aspects of the fear of public speaking that have already been explored (i.e. ministry calling, church leadership, and preaching).

Biblical Terms for "Preaching"

There are two main terms for preaching in the New Testament that afford insight into different aspects of this practice. The first term, *evangelizo*, can be translated as "to bring a message, preach good news." This term is almost always used in the specialized sense of preaching the gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ (Mounce, 2006, p. 533). The term emphasizes the content of what is being proclaimed. For example, the angel Gabriel sent by God came to "bring this good news" (Luke 1:19) and the twelve disciples sent by Jesus went into the villages, "bringing the good news" (9:6). The second

37

term, *kerysso,* is commonly translated as "to proclaim, tell, announce publically" and conveys more the act of proclamation (Mounce, 2006, p. 533). Although it is primarily attached to the Gospel message, the term is also used in Scripture to refer to other announcements, such as the message of John the Baptist (Luke 3:3, John 3:1) and the proclamation of the law of Moses (Acts 15:21). With this understanding in mind, a case for the priority of preaching can be made.

A Case for the Priority of Preaching

For those considering a pastoral call and who fear the thought of public speaking, a case can be made for the importance of preaching. John Stott (1982) opened *Between Two Worlds* by stating, "Preaching is indispensable to Christianity. Without preaching a necessary part of its authenticity has been lost" (p. 15). He went on to outline how God spoke in history through prophets, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, strongly emphasizing that it is "God's speech which makes our speech necessary. We must speak what he has spoken. Hence the paramount obligation to preach" (p. 15). In *Biblical Preaching,* Haddon Robinson (2001) was so convinced of the power contained in preaching that he stated, "To the New Testament writers, preaching stands as the event through which God works" (p. 19). A key passage in the New Testament is found in Acts where seven deacons are appointed to the task of serving widows so that preaching might remain a priority for the disciples in their evangelistic ministry of sharing God's Word (Acts 6:1-7). The importance of preaching is not only to proclaim the gospel message of Jesus Christ, but to present opportunity for a human response. Explaining in detail the heart of the Gospel message, (Rom 10:5-13), the apostle Paul emphasized how critical preaching was in a personal conversion: "But how are they to call on one in whom they have not

believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how

are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?" (10:14) Paul developed this thought

further when he expressed his passion to preach through the power of God's Spirit in

places where the Gospel had not been heard in order to win over the hearts of the Gentile

community (15:18-21). In fact, Paul saw this preaching or proclamation of the gospel as

more than a good deed with the potential to covert souls, but an act of obedience

connected to his calling: "If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting,

for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!" (1 Cor

9:16) This proclamation of the gospel was a priority, but did not take place without its

share of adversity.

Boldness in the Face of Adversity

Holy Scripture has provided numerous examples of figures who modeled

boldness of preaching, including the most powerful of all preachers, Jesus Christ. The

Gospel of Mark revealed that shortly after the baptism of Jesus, Jesus began a preaching

ministry in Galilee, "proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled

and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news'" (Mark

1:14-15). In fact, Jesus provided a preaching tour in this region, presenting the Gospel

within the Jewish synagogues scattered throughout the local neighborhoods (1:35-39). In

the Gospel of Luke there is an inside view of a sermon given by Jesus at the synagogue of

his home town, Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30). Jesus stood up to read from the sermon text of

Isaiah and then sat down to proclaim how the prophetic words were finding fulfillment in

his ministry (1:21). As Jesus fleshed out this particular message, his words started to

enrage those in attendance, creating such a stir that a group attempted to hurl him off a

cliff (1:29). Rather than becoming discouraged or shying away from the frightening response to his preaching, Jesus stayed faithful to his calling and continued his preaching tour (1:30). Other neighborhood synagogues were much warmer in their embrace of his preaching and begged him to stay longer. His response to these requests not only revealed the purpose behind his preaching itinerary, but his bold commitment to stay faithful to a preaching ministry beyond his comfort zone. He stated: "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose" (4:43). As he faithfully preached the Gospel message with boldness, Jesus also prepared those around him for a ministry of proclamation (Luke 10:5-15; Mark 6:6-13). He equipped not only his 12 closest disciples, but appointed 70 others to go ahead of him in pairs to every ministry setting he intended to visit, saying, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Luke 10:1-2).

Jesus was not alone in demonstrating boldness in preaching. Two of the apostles who also modeled boldness of preaching were Peter and Paul. Four of their sermon texts can be found in the book of Acts, two by Peter (2:14-41; 3:11-26) and two by Paul (13:16-43; 17:22-31). These sermons reveal basic truths that were proclaimed by these faithful preachers, including fulfilled prophecy related to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (2:17-21); the ministry of Jesus who was crucified and raised from the dead (2:24-28; 3:15; 13:30-35; 17:31); and the gift of salvation that can be attained through personal faith and repentance (3:16; 13:38-39). As Peter and Paul conducted their preaching ministries, they did so with boldness, faithfully presenting a message that was offensive to the ears of both civil and religious leaders at the time. For example, at one stage in their ministry, Peter and the apostles were placed in prison for the disruption caused by

their preaching. It is recorded in Scripture that just before their release, the Sanhedrin called in the apostles, had them flogged, and gave specific orders for them not to speak in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:40). Peter and his preaching colleagues viewed their suffering for the sake of the Gospel as reason for rejoicing and it is recorded that "day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ" (5:42). The apostle Paul had every reason to fear for the continuation of his preaching ministry. Not only did he understand the mindset of those who persecuted Christian preachers (8:1-3), but he suffered horrible abuse because of his commitment to faithfully preach the Gospel message (2 Cor11:16-30). Paul never wavered in his commitment to preaching, however, and summed up his attitude of boldness by declaring that despite his many hardships, "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God" (Acts 20:27). As the apostle Paul modeled this type of boldness to his young disciple, Timothy, he also spoke these words: "Proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching" (2 Tim 4:2). This message is relevant to all with a fear of public speaking, and leads to this final section of theological reflection.

Theological Implications

When it comes to ministry calling, church leadership challenges, the preaching of the Gospel Message, and how these all relate to the fear of public speaking, the bottom line is that it is not about the teacher or the preacher. God has clearly laid out his message, the good news of Jesus Christ, for any follower called to minister with speech. Many who respond to God's calling will inevitably find themselves faced with a

responsibility to proclaim his message in a public way. The called one will face a variety of challenges, whether or not he or she has a fear of public speaking. There will be both perceived and real dangers involved. There will be audiences that respond with apathy, ridicule, and in extreme cases, even violence. Public speaking, teaching and preaching, by their very nature, require obedience and boldness. However, with eternal implications spelled out by Scripture and the inspiring boldness modeled by Christ and his apostles, and with the reminder of God's strength working through human weakness and the equipping power of the Holy Spirit, any person who honestly examines a perceived call should find powerful conviction to address any hesitation or obstacle, including the fear of public speaking. Again, this privilege is not about the messenger, but the one who calls and equips the messenger to proclaim this life-changing message.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I evaluate key literature addressing the fear of public speaking that has informed my research project. As mentioned in Chapter One, research has indicated that a strikingly high percentage of people in our culture consider public speaking their most significant fear. For those who live with this reality, this fear is manifested by its most common effect—avoidance. Thus there are people who will go to great lengths to avoid academic courses, certain occupations, and even upward mobility within their career paths because of their fear of public speaking. It is thus my belief that a hidden group of men and women with great potential for Christian leadership are missing their potential "call" because of this deep-rooted fear. Unfortunately, my research uncovered very little written material dealing with this problematic concern from the perspective of pastors, theologians, or Christian researchers within the field of communication. Most of the material that I have chosen to review in this chapter therefore comes from the perspective of behavioral scientists, clinical psychologists, and noteworthy voices within the field of communication. The selected material contains constructive insights that I found helpful in devising a solution for the fear of public speaking.

I have chosen to divide this chapter into six broad categories or themes: Power of Self-Disclosure, Critical Nature of Group Support, Understanding Fear, Addressing Fear, Staying Grounded, and A Further Plan of Action. Several publications are introduced within each category which inform the theme and provide insights and potential solutions. A few of the publications provide Christian insight, but these are dealt with

sparingly until the fifth section, "Staying Grounded." Ultimately, the material introduced, discussed, and evaluated is used to design a booklet to help potential Christian leaders reduce and/or learn to manage their fear of public speaking.

Power of Self-Disclosure

A common theme among communication experts is that a person with a fear of public speaking is in the best position to identify this fear and must desire to address it if there is to be any hope of improvement. Because many who fear public speaking are prone to keeping this problem hidden, self-disclosure is a critical step towards learning to manage or conquer this often neglected fear.

The late Dale Carnegie, with more than 750,000 graduates from his public speaking courses, utilized a pragmatic approach towards inspiring self-disclosure. He wrote his book *The Quick & Easy Way to Effective Speaking* with the assumption that anyone reading it must have a desire for self-improvement. In fact, he summed up the central desire of many who sign up for his course in these words:

> When I am called upon to stand up and speak, I become so self-conscious, so frightened, that I can't think clearly, can't concentrate, can't remember what I intended to say. I want to gain self-confidence, poise, and the ability to think on my feet. I want to get my thoughts together in logical order, and I want to be able to talk clearly and convincingly before a business or social group. (Carnegie, 1962, p. 15)

Having set the mood with this description of a fear of public speaking connected to a performance concern, Carnegie then asked, "Doesn't this sound familiar? Haven't you experienced these same feelings of inadequacy? Wouldn't you give a small fortune to

44

have the ability to speak convincingly and persuasively in public?" (p. 15). Carnegie not only assumed that the average person picking up his book had a fear of public speaking, but also sought to inspire the reader by appealing to a sense of hope that can accompany self-disclosure. He used language such as "miracle" and "testimony" to suggest future success was possible, and wrote, "With the right resolve and direction, I know you can [succeed]" (p. 16). He then presented story after story of people once paralyzed by the fear of public speaking, from ordinary business people or school teachers to those who were famous, who were then transformed by taking his course and implementing its principles in everyday life. He informed the reader that this fear was normal, stating that surveys had identified 80 % – 90% of all students in speech classes suffered from stage fright upon their initial enrollment. Ultimately, his starting point is self-disclosure which functions as a springboard in addressing the fear of public speaking and in making a commitment towards self-improvement. Having dealt with the fear of public speaking for years, I can attest to the effectiveness of this approach. His understanding of my once hidden thoughts and warped mindset resonated with me. In fact, I could see how his normalization of fear through practical human insight and testimony might inspire a person to come forward with this fear and join a group or register for a class. While Carnegie presented the power of self-disclosure in a highly pragmatic way, other experts have provided similar insight from a more clinical standpoint.

Janet Esposito, a psychotherapist and licensed clinical social worker, has presented an equally convincing appeal to the power of self-disclosure for those with a fear of public speaking. Esposito began with a shadow of darkness that seemingly loomed over the problem. While Carnegie's approach felt cheery and almost easy, Esposito

(2000) wrote, "Roll up your sleeves and let's shine a spotlight down this alley." The language and tone of her insight conveyed the depth of her personal suffering. She began *In the Spotlight* by revealing, "I suffered alone with this fear, and experienced a silent terror anytime I found a situation where I had to speak" (p. 2). She testified how speaking in formal settings led to symptoms as terrifying as full-blown panic attacks. Esposito detailed how she was able to hide this fear for years, arranging much of her schedule to avoid meetings and speaking engagements. She was eventually forced to confront her fear when she joined a partnership in a private practice that necessitated joint presentations at the local hospital. Her rallying cry for those with a fear of public speaking was this: "You are not alone!" (p. 8). Similar to Carnegie, Esposito has tried throughout the book to normalize this fear and connect the reader with an assortment of people whose lives have been improved by addressing it. She emphasized how hidden the suffering of this fear can be and described the shock of friends at her own "coming out." "I have always been seen as an outgoing, well-spoken, and confident person. There are those who are secretly suffering!" (p. 8). She repeatedly stressed, "You are definitely not alone!" Before even beginning to explore the reasons for their fear or methods to overcome it, readers are urged to carry out some self-assessment and are challenged with these words:

> It is important to get a picture of where you are now, both with your experience of fear and your level of motivation to do whatever it takes to overcome this fear. Many people look for quick fixes that they hope will be comfortable and easy. I cannot tell you that this process will be comfortable and easy; in fact, I can tell you there will be moments of discomfort as you take more risks to overcome your

46

problem. Any true success in life requires hard work and dedication, and this is no different. What I can tell you firsthand, is that the principles, techniques, and methods I will describe to you do work, if you use them with consistency and perseverance. Like many challenges in life, what you get out of it reflects what you put into it. I think of the saying, "No guts, no glory." Overcoming this problem has been my biggest challenge and my biggest victory in life, and I can tell you it was definitely worth the effort and the discomfort I experienced. (p. 33)

While self-disclosure seemed like a natural course for Carnegie, Esposito treated the "coming out" aspect as a deeply difficult process that involved overcoming initial shame and intense discomfort. Although the tone of her book was dramatic, the nature of her professional work was dealing with those at the more extreme fringes of social anxiety. She was writing about the type of fear that leads to full-blown panic attacks and that calls for a more therapeutic approach. Regardless of these differences, Esposito has added a valuable voice to the conversation and has demonstrated an equally strong desire to connect personally with the reader, highlight the normality of this hidden fear, and offer hope to those willing to self-disclose and commit to facing this challenge.

Betty Horwitz, a licensed speech pathologist and communications professor, also took a clinical standpoint, yet pulled the discussion into a classroom setting. Horwitz affirmed the power of self-disclosure and has promoted a self-assessment tool to assist in the classroom. She stated that the primary purpose of her book, *Communication Apprehension: Origins and Management,* was "to demystify the devastating fear of performance suffered by millions of people and to help them cope with the problem" (Horwitz, 2002, p. vii). She called this fear the "hidden communication disorder" because

47

it was "frequently not recognized, acknowledged, or discussed" (p. 1). And she made it clear that confronting the issue had little to do with courage. Using stereotypically bold people as illustrative examples, she explained as follows:

> For example, a brave firefighter who feared public speaking more than going into a burning building said, "I never knew the speech bone was connected to the urinary tract." Another courageous emergency manager who avoided oral presentations claimed that the terror of public speaking was second only to his missions as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam. A foreign news correspondent confessed that he would rather dodge bullets in civil wars then speak in front of a live audience. Like millions of persons, these people, heroic in the face of external danger, cower in front of audiences. (p. 9)

The first step Horwitz would take in her public speaking class was to have students rate their personal level of fear, and then to literally draw fear and give it a name. Before dismissing the class, she would give the students a self-assessment tool (PRCA-24) as homework in order to provide a clearer understanding of where they stood in relation to this fear. I found this tool extremely helpful, both for helping students self-assess, and also for enabling teachers identify and help people who may be quietly struggling with this fear. This, in turn, could serve as a valuable step towards potential self-disclosure. This insight led me to the person who created this self-assessment tool: James C. McCroskey.

McCroskey saw such value in the power of self-disclosure that he developed a tool for self-assessing the fear of public speaking. In *Communication Apprehension, Avoidance, and Effectiveness* he distinguished between Communication Apprehension

(CA) in general and context-based CA, where the most common fear was that of public speaking (stage fright). While 20% of those who took McCroskey's PRCA-24[1] scored high for CA in general, an amazing 70% scored high on McCroskey's PRPSA[2] for the fear of public speaking (Richmond, et al., 2013). These self-measuring tools played a valuable role in helping those with the fear of public speaking identify their level of fear as well as see the normality of their problem. In the publication *Avoiding Communication,* McCroskey expressed the view that self-reporting is the best tool for identifying those who fear public speaking: "There are several reasons for this clear preference on the part of both researcher and practitioners—some good, some not so good" (Daly et al., 2009, pp.175-176). One reason cited was that the best way to find out something was simply to ask. McCroskey agreed with this logic, yet made a qualification: "I cannot argue that logic, except to point out that it is true only if the person *knows the answer* and is *willing to tell you the truth*" (p. 176). He added that self-reporting measures are most appropriate when the person taking a test has no reason to fear any negative consequences that may accompany their responses. Continuing with his assessment, he highlighted a few validated instruments, and then summarized his conclusion as follows:

> All in all, self-report measures are potentially very useful for researchers concerned with willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, self-perceived communication competence, and (with appropriate caution) shyness. They represent an inexpensive and efficient method of assessing large numbers of respondents with minimum effort imposition. (p. 178)

---

[1] See Appendix 1: Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24 (PRCA-24).
[2] See Appendix 2: Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA).

Although this publication has much more to say about self-assessment as well as self-disclosure, much of the language is highly technical and mostly consistent with observations already made. Overall, the different voices reviewed above all promoted the power of self-disclosure by normalizing the fear of public speaking, providing the tools for self-assessment and by seeking to inspire the desire to overcome or manage this fear that so often remains hidden.

Critical Nature of Group Support

A second common theme found among communication experts was that group support plays a major role in successfully overcoming the fear of public speaking. It is powerful to hear the testimony of someone who has learned to overcome this fear, yet it is equally valuable to feed from group identification for inspiration and moral support. Insights such as "you are not alone" or "this is normal" can come to life when the person struggling with fear or shame can recognize that they are not facing this battle on their own. Because group support is often the landing place for a person who has self-disclosed their fear of public speaking, I have drawn insight mainly from the same cluster of experts to explicate this theme.

Dale Carnegie (1962) emphasized the role of the group by presenting his public speaking course almost as an Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) type experience. It seems as though he wanted his reader to say, "I need help and I am ready to work at this one day at a time!" Carnegie emphasized the need to "take heart from the experience of others" in a group context and downplayed the role of "sophisticated rhetoric" and "refined speakers." He put it thus: "What members of my classes wanted was enough courage to stand on their hind legs and make a clear, coherent report at their next business meeting"

(p. 17). He required all who took his classes to give at least one talk before "fellow members" for a specific reason: "Because no one can learn to speak in public without speaking in public any more than a person can learn to swim without getting in the water" (p. 28). Overall, he consistently celebrated the role of a group in overcoming fear and becoming an effective public speaker. Again, his approach resonated with my learning style, for he wrote in the common person's language with practical insight and humor, providing a no-nonsense approach towards self-improvement and public speaking success.

Carnegie's insight has been further strengthened by support from clinical social workers, classroom professors, and research experts in the field of communication. From a clinical standpoint, Janet Esposito (2000) has pointed to the tremendous healing power that can occur when those with a fear of public speaking connect with a group. When people came together in her "No More Stage Fright" classes and shared their experiences, they started "to realize they truly are not alone when they see others who share their fear and all of the feelings associated with it. They start to feel not so different or unusual, and they start on the path toward self-acceptance" (p. 13). Although I found it a strong statement that those with a fear of public speaking were in need of "self-acceptance," I recognized that she was sharing from the perspective of a psychotherapist and was often exposed to students or patients with deep-rooted issues that extended to the fear of public speaking. However, regardless of context, her point remains valid and is consistent with the high value placed upon group support by each of the experts in this review.

Betty Horwitz (2002) provided a public speaking program, and has also promoted the value of group support. Her course, entitled "Speaking Without Fear," was offered on a university campus. Although Horwitz believed CA could be managed individually, she gave several reasons why a small group is the most effective format: 1) The presence of other group members dispels the notion this problem is unique, thereby encouraging self-disclosure to help diffuse the problem. 2) A group provides the stressful environment needed to desensitize a speaker's fear, as well as the opportunity for objective feedback to refute erroneously held perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs. 3) Fellow participants provide support and reassurance that is often more convincing than anything that can be said by the most effective facilitator. 4) The heterogeneity of a diverse group makes the experience interesting. It allows members to appreciate the fear that unites them over the many distinctions of their lives that may cause division—eliciting human connection and demystifying "their respective paper tigers." 5) Participants can learn from observing how others respond to stress or "challenge," see it as natural or at times even good, and learn how to better understand and process such a challenge. 6) The group format elicits productive discussion that can help acknowledge and affirm personal growth over the course of the experience. I found Horwitz's reasoning and experience provided grounded insight into the value of group support. However, there has also been research that suggests a limitation to the concept of group support.

Communication research experts have had concerns about people with high CA in relation to classroom settings. I add this not to discount the value of group identity, but to add a twist to the dialogue. Although many treatments affirmed by CA researchers as effective were implemented within the context of groups, there is an important element to

52

add to the conversation. With regard to a classroom setting, Richmond, Wrench and McCroskey (2013) noted the following concerning trend:

> One study found that over fifty percent of the students with high CA dropped a required public-speaking course during the first three weeks of the course, just before the first speech was due to be presented. Other studies found that high communication apprehensives who remain in courses with high communication requirements are likely to be absent on days when they are scheduled for presentations. This finding is true not only at the college and high school levels but also at the elementary school level where "show and tell," "see and say," or "book report" assignments are required. Young children often claim they are unable to read so they can avoid having to read aloud to the class. (p. 64)

In addition to concerns about avoidance, research has revealed a tremendous difference between students taking required courses as opposed to voluntary classes. For example, most students who found speech or communication course classes helpful did not have high CA. For those with high CA who improved, most had signed up for the course voluntarily. Although I agree that it is a significant challenge to motivate anyone with a fear of public speaking to take advantage of formalized group settings, I would argue that these insights affirmed that those with a fear of public speaking could benefit from group interaction when properly motivated to join others who suffer from the same fear. Overall, despite the challenge of avoidance issues, I found no material in any of the above sources that contradicted the thesis that a group can be highly instrumental for those who wish to address the fear of public speaking.

Understanding Fear

A third common theme among communication experts was the value of understanding one's fear of public speaking. (Why is this happening? What is causing my heart to race and my hands to tremble? Is this controllable? Is there something wrong with me?) Many communication experts believed it was important to understand what lay behind this fear with its inward and outward manifestations. In the same way that it is helpful to receive a diagnosis for a physical health concern, those with the fear of public speaking can benefit from insight that explains what might be causing the debilitating symptoms attached to this problem.

Each of the publications contributing to understanding this fear have presented their insight in ways that can inform future management, improvement, or healing. Leading voices in the field of communication research, Richmond, Wrench, and McCroskey (2013), have explained the biology of fear in relation to public speaking, describing how our bodies are hard-wired to react to fear-inducing objects and situations. This process they described as generally starting "in the front part of the brain, the cerebral cortex, because that's where most cognitive thinking emerges. In the case of public speaking, just thinking about public speaking for some people is enough to trigger the biological response" (p. 32). It is believed that once the brain sees danger and transmits information to the area that processes our memory and emotional reactions, simultaneous messages are transmitted to the body. Once triggered, these messages tell the heart to start pumping blood into our extremities (causing increased heart rate, blood pressure, and sweaty palms) and alert the muscles to prepare for "fight or flight." Because the brain is now telling the body to gear up for an emergency, it also sends a message to

stop all unnecessary functions. This would explain a condition such as dry mouth (there is no need to salivate). Unfortunately for some, the body experiences and reacts to fear-inducing objects without differentiating between them. While such reactions might be beneficial for a person facing a bear in the wilderness, they are not so effective for public speaking. However, if a person can be taught to understand the basic science behind the fear of public speaking, they might learn to channel or even overcome such fear.

Science can be used to make further distinctions. Thus Richmond, Wrench and McCroskey (2013) also explained the distinction between trait-like Communication Apprehension (CA) and context-based CA as it relates to the fear of public speaking. Trait-like CA was described as measuring the general disposition of a person, which is believed to change only minimally over time unless addressed with treatment. The PRCA-24 developed by McCroskey[3] has been highlighted as the best available measure of trait-like CA (35). Accumulated results from this test revealed 20% of people in our culture score extremely highly for CA, while another 20% score extremely low. Context-based CA differs from trait-like CA in that it is not confined to a general disposition. Thus, a person who is fearful about speaking up in class or asking someone on a date may have absolutely no fear in other communication contexts, such as making friends at camp or speaking with a teacher after class. Stage fright or the fear of public speaking is considered the most common form of context-based CA. McCroskey's PRPSA[4] has been widely accepted as the best measure available for those with a fear of public speaking. Interestingly, and based on thousands who have completed the PRPSA, 70% of respondents were shown to be moderately high or high in relation to CA. Although high

---

[3] The PRCA-24 was introduced earlier and is attached in Appendix 1.
[4] The PRPSA was introduced earlier and is attached in Appendix 2.

trait-like CA individuals are obviously more likely to have a fear of public speaking, there is a large percentage of context-based CA (specifically public speaking) types who scored normal or low for the more broadly-based trait-like CA. Causes for CA were cited by this group of researchers as hereditary, modeling, and mixed reinforcement and they noted that "all studies agree that biology is only part of the picture" (p. 40). Potential causes of situational CA, which include the fear of public speaking, were listed as novelty (new situations), formality, subordinate status, conspicuous (new person in class), being unfamiliar, dissimilarity, excessive attention, degree of evaluation, and prior history of failure. Although I found sifting through this research tedious, I felt the insights gleaned were powerful in helping people not only understand the basic science behind their fear of public speaking, but the situations that might contribute to triggering this fear.

Further insights and distinctions in understanding the relationship between genetics and environment were discussed by another group of communication researchers. John Daly, John Caughlin and Laura Stafford (2009) presented their perspectives on the four interrelated clusters that shape an individual's level of worry or enjoyment of communication. These four clusters are genetic predisposition, reinforcement, skills acquisition, and modeling. This group argued genetics clearly contributes to fear of communication, yet emphasized that much of this fear is not genetic. With regard to reinforcement, positive and negative consequences were shown to connect to children at home and at school at a very young age. In fact, negative expectations and random or inconsistent patterns of responses were believed to cause a sense of helplessness. Skills acquisition was believed to challenge the enjoyment of communication, include deafness, cultural challenges, over-protective parents, and self-

56

perceived failures. Lastly, modeling was believed to have an influential effect on children who had learned to imitate parents or supervisors from day care centers. If these interrelated clusters have the ability to affect the level of worry or enjoyment of communication in general, a case could be easily made for their equal relevancy when trying to understand the fear of public speaking. Whether or not a person can fully access the root or cause of their public speaking fear, most communication experts would agree that a clearer understanding can be helpful towards eventually addressing this fear.

Addressing Fear

A fourth common theme among communication experts was that of addressing the fear of public speaking. From learning practical ways to improve basic skills to making a commitment to professional therapy or treatment, the material I have chosen offers a wide range of theories about what might contribute to personal growth and potential healing. Here I present a general overview of the strategies that are available from the abundance of material, and from a variety of perspectives.

Dale Carnegie (1962) took a practical, head-on approach to overcoming the fear of public speaking. He urged readers to acquire the basic skills. He wrote, "Why be a victim of butterflies?" He went on to challenge readers with these words, "Surely, you realize that this condition can be remedied, that training and practice will wear away your audience fright and give you self-confidence" (p. 16). His advice for getting the most out of his book included taking heart from the experience of others (there is no such thing as a born public speaker), keeping one's goal before one (visualizing success), predetermining one's mind to success (thinking positively), and seizing every opportunity

to practice. From the hundreds of pages of practical advice on becoming an effective speaker, I found this quote appropriately captured his approach:

> If stage fright gets out of hand and seriously curtails your effectiveness by causing mental blocks, lack of fluency, uncontrollable tics, and excessive muscular spasm, you should not despair. These symptoms are not unusual in beginners. If you make the effort, you will find the degree of stage fright soon reduced to the point where it will prove a help and not a hindrance. (p. 34)

Carnegie simply sought to connect with readers, to normalize their fear, to set up a sense of vision and equip them with practical skills of the trade, and finally, to send them off with a spirit of perseverance towards success. Again, I found Carnegie's approach highly relatable and effective.

Other voices that have contributed practical advice in addressing this fear include Stephen Lucas, a professor of communication arts, who encouraged students to address their fear of public speaking in a way that channeled nervous excitement constructively. In *The Art of Public Speaking,* Lucas (2009) wrote, "Don't think of yourself as having stage fright. Instead, think of it as 'stage excitement' or 'stage enthusiasm'" (p. 10). He likened public speaking nerves to a person's first day in kindergarten or a first date. Most people are nervous when confronted with situations that are new and unknown. Lucas emphasized the value of seeking out experience and of recognizing that the road might be bumpy. However, he stressed non-threatening settings such as a speech class that could be constructively treated as a laboratory in which to undertake such a "trial" (p. 11). In addition to experience, Lucas highlighted preparation as a practical way of gaining confidence. He recommended one to two hours preparation for every minute of speaking

time and cited information that suggested such preparation could reduce stage fright by up to 75%. Although "being prepared" did not resonate with my experience in overcoming stage fright, I did find his insight on "thinking positively" helpful. Replacing thoughts such as "I wish I didn't have to give this speech" or "I'm not a great public speaker," with "This speech is a chance for me to share my ideas" and "No one's perfect, but I'm getting better with each speech I give" were offered in a way that constructively addressed negative thoughts (p. 12). Lucas offered other constructive examples, such as studies that back the power of visualization often employed by Olympic athletes, for example. He stressed also the need for a person with this fear to maintain realistic expectations.

While I related well to the practical approaches provided by Carnegie and Lucas, I realized there were more clinical methods available to address the fear of public speaking. For example, Janet Esposito (2000) has offered cognitive behavioral methods as treatment formulae for facing the fear of public speaking. She has written of a change of mindset as the road towards more effective behavior. "While we may not be able to gain immediate control over our initial feeling of fear, we can regain feelings of control to a large degree by how we think about and respond to our fearful feelings" (p. 43). Suggestions for "gaining control" included: making peace with our fear ("riding the wave" and "acceptance"); creating a safe place (positive thinking); grounding oneself (taking the focus from self and placing it on real objects in the room); and a variety of breathing techniques utilized to tell the body there is no longer danger (pp. 46-56). Esposito has devoted much energy towards shifting perceptions ("cognitive distortions"), visualization exercises, and getting to the source of fear or shame (family trauma,

embarrassing experiences). However, the material I found most useful was a section entitled, "It's Not About Me" (p. 57).

"It's Not About Me" has captured Esposito's desire to change cognitive behavior patterns in a manner that shifts all focus away from self. The opening line of this chapter stated, "The fear of public speaking and performing is created by a lot of self-focusing and internal preoccupation" (p. 57). What will people think of me? If they detect anxiety, will they lose respect or think there is something wrong? Esposito warned that self-consuming thoughts created psychological distance between the speaker and the audience, leading to "a feeling of being out on a limb all by ourselves without any support from others, which further reinforces our fear" (p. 57). She argued that such intense self-focusing and sense of self-importance can cause real distortions in how a person views themselves, leading to a mindset that is, "overly focused on our feelings of self-doubt, fear and vulnerability" (p. 58). She then suggested, "The solution to breaking this cycle of negative self-focusing is to take the focus off ourselves and to put our focus on our audience" (p. 58). This shift promotes what a speaker can do for their audience rather than how the audience feels about the speaker. Esposito summed up this section by testifying about her own life, stating, "Using these principles has grounded me more in my adult self and has led me to rise above my self-consciousness and preoccupation about my own performance. I have been able to rise above my concerns about self and to focus more on my purpose and mission as a speaker, which is to contribute to the lives of others" (p. 60). Although this final statement came from a purely secular perspective, I found it appropriate for any young man or woman desiring to serve God within a ministry

context. Esposito's approach also fitted neatly within the clinical insight provided by leading experts in the field of communication.

Richmond, Wrench, and McCroskey (2013), have offered what they believe to be the five most commonly employed methods of treating an individual with a fear of public speaking. The five methods cited are systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, skills training, visualization, and psychopharmacology. With regard to systematic desensitization, they named behavior therapy as the most widely-used method in the communication field. This type of therapy has two primary components: 1) Teaching the subjects the procedures for deep muscular relaxation. 2) Having the subjects visualize participating in a series of communication situations while in a state of deep relaxation. The typical program was described as taking place within the context of a small group and having 5-7 one-hour sessions. Each session would provide a new public speaking challenge and progress its way systematically to the most potentially stress-provoking scenario. Incredibly, 90% of those who received this treatment were found to have reduced levels of CA and of those who entered as high CA, 80% were no longer high level after treatment. The authors described cognitive restructuring as a method for addressing the irrational thoughts people might have about themselves and for improving behaviors connected to public speaking. Treatment typically involves identification of negative self-perceptions (illogical beliefs) and learning to replace them with coping statements (positive to replace illogical). Research has shown this method to be effective in reducing self-reported apprehension as well as reducing the observable manifestations of fear. Further, research has shown that these two treatments (SD and CR) work most effectively when administered together rather than alone. The authors considered skills

61

training, the third method, to have limited success as a whole. They cited high school and college communication classes as an example, and noted: "Survey research conducted with adults in the United States suggests this form of skill training is almost wholly ineffective in reducing CA" (p. 102). However, they did point to a modest reduction in CA when "skills training" was applied towards specific goals, as long as two factors are present: 1) willing cooperation of the person being treated, and 2) narrowly defined targets for improvement. They described visualization, the fourth method cited, as a treatment used to help highly apprehensive people build confidence about public presentations. Lastly, psychopharmacology involves the recognition by communication researchers that there are a number of prescription medications available to help individuals who struggle with public speaking anxiety. This method is introduced as a last resort for those who have failed to find success with other methods and is recommended only under the care of a physician or trained psychiatrist. Overall, I found the outline and description of each of these methods, as well as the research presented to back several claims, useful towards a better understanding of a more clinical approach to the fear of public speaking. Having athletic interests, I decided to dig a little deeper into the concept of visualization, which is often used in sports psychology and is now receiving increased interest in the field of communication.

Joe Ayres, Tim Hopf, Michael Hazel, Debbie Sonandre, and Tanichya Wongprasert have all contributed insights relating to the effectiveness of performance visualization for addressing the fear of public speaking. Visualization refers to "nonverbal processes people use to create or recreate sensations associated with real or hypothetical experiences" (Daly et al., 2009, p. 375). Several research studies were cited

62

by the authors that demonstrated the effectiveness of visualization in reducing the fear of public speaking. However, while studies present considerable evidence that visualization affects perception, there is no evidence that it actually alters behavior during a speech. Interestingly, this concern then led to the development of the concept of performance visualization which the authors described as follows:

> Performance visualization for speakers involves watching a videotape of a proficient speaker, making a mental movie of the videotape, and replacing the speaker on the tape with a visual image of oneself as the speaker. Lastly, the speaker practices delivering a speech by imagining and practicing the actual speech until the speaker is satisfied the speech meets the image. Then of course, the speaker delivers the speech to an audience. (p. 383)

Unlike visualization, performance visualization has been shown to be associated with altering speech behavior. In fact it is reported that "performance visualization has been found to be as effective as visualizing in reducing trait CA, state CA, and negative thinking, but superior to visualization in reducing behavioral disruption" (pp. 393-394). In other words, performance visualization has been shown to reduce communication avoidance as well as those undesirable visual effects that disrupt a performance or speech. Added to this report was the obvious insight that this practice is more effective for vivid imagers than non-vivid imagers. Again, although I found the clinical material tedious to follow, many of the insights were helpful in grounding or explaining the practical advice that resonates more easily with my mindset.

Staying Grounded

Before moving to the final theme, it is necessary to insert a Christian perspective into the conversation. As important as it is to draw from a variety of respected voices in the field of communication, I believe spiritual insight provides a valuable perspective and a theological grounding. Initially, and having scoured through hundreds of sources in a seminary library, I found little content that directly informed the project from a Christian standpoint. However, upon deeper analysis, I was able to discern spiritual insights that not only contributed to the conversation, but did so in a way that brought the necessary Christian perspective for those struggling with the fear of public speaking or wrestling with the thought of avoiding a potential call into Christian leadership.

John Stott (1982), a pastor, scholar, and renowned preacher, has provided a grounded perspective on the role of public speaking for a pastor or preacher. In his book *Between Two Worlds,* Stott has devoted an entire chapter to the nature of a preacher's calling. First, he argued, an effective preacher should not be worried about what people think: "Neither men-pleasers nor time-savers ever made good preachers. We are called to the sacred task of biblical exposition, commissioned to proclaim what God has said, not what people want to hear (p. 299). Secondly, Stott emphasized that God has provided the material for a pastor or preacher to present and has done so adequately. "The medium of the gospel has been presented by the Good Physician; we may neither dilute it nor add ingredients to make it more palatable; we must serve it neat. Nor need we fear that people will not take it. To be sure, some may leave, but most will respond" (p. 299). He cited Proverbs 29:25: "Truly 'the fear of man leaves a snare'" (p.300). Here Stott was simply making the point that fear of public speaking goes with the territory of being a preacher.

64

Although there is no need to fear the reaction of people, it is better to get used to the fact that not everyone is going to like what the preacher has to say. Or more appropriately, not everyone is going to like what God has to say through the preacher. Stott then shifted emphasis to the importance of "boldness."

He outlined a history of courageous preachers, beginning with Old Testament figures and working his way to the present day. He highlighted ancient preachers, such as Elijah, Moses, Nathan, Amos, and Jeremiah. Loneliness characterized these bold preachers who endured false accusations and opposition to their message. Stott then covered New Testament preachers, including John the Baptist, whose public speaking ministry cost him his life, Jesus, whose message and ministry led to death on the cross, and the apostle Paul, who also endured hostility, persecution, suffering, and death. Stott closed out this outline by mentioning modern day preachers who courageously "refused to edit their message in order to make it more popular" (p. 305). He stressed faithful preachers were not only alienated from people, but from other preachers as well. "The fact is that the authentic gospel of the New Testament remains extremely offensive to human pride and nobody who preaches it faithfully can expect to escape at least some degree of opposition" (p. 309). I do not repeat Stott's insights in order to further scare the person with a fear of public speaking, but rather to provide a biblically-grounded perspective. Fortunately Stott does not leave the reader needing to become a superhuman person of courage in order to live up to the historical preachers of our faith.

Stott tempered his message of boldness in preaching with emphasis on the power of humility. While most public speaking experts have emphasized programs of self-help to attain boldness of speech, Stott has written of the humility of dependence. He stated,

"Every preacher desires to be effective. He hopes that people will listen to his sermons, understand them and respond to them in faith and obedience. But on what does he rely on for this effect?" (p. 328). Stott's argument was that too many preachers rely on themselves, on their temperament, strong will, outgoing personality, keen intellect, or the fact of being a born leader. The danger, in his view, is not that these qualities are bad or that a person should avoid being themselves, but that a person with God-given talents must recognize that it is impossible to change lives for Christ without the inclusion of God-given blessing. Stott nailed down this concept of the humility of dependence when he wrote, "Only Jesus Christ by his Holy Spirit can open blind eyes and deaf ears, make the lame walk and the dumb speak, prick the conscience, enlighten the mind, fire the heart, move the will, give life to the dead and rescue slaves from Satanic bondage" (p. 329). Thus, the type of courage Stott emphasized is grounded in humility and must be drawn from the power of Christ by his Holy Spirit.

Stott provided one final insight that can bring encouragement to a person who struggles with the fear of public speaking. He emphasized the New Testament teaching of the way power can be found through weakness. Why weakness? Here Stott quoted the apostle Paul, "In order that it may be plainly seen that the tremendous power which sustains and converted you comes from God and not from ourselves." Why is human weakness, including the fear of public speaking, permitted? Again Stott quoted Scripture: It is "in order to be the medium through which divine power could operate and the arena in which it could be displayed." What does a preacher's humility indicate? To this Stott gave the grounded reminder, "It indicates that our message must be God's Word not ours, our aim Christ's glory not ours, and our confidence the Holy Spirit's power, not ours"

66

(pp. 331-335). In the quest to overcome the fear of public speaking, the Christian believer has this powerful reminder to ground them in future growth. Additional insight for addressing the fear of public speaking can be gleaned from a variety of Christian voices.

Proper preparation, including attention to performance and awareness of the character behind the person giving a speech, are important factors in addressing the fear of public speaking. Charles Bartow (1995), a Christian professor of communications and expert in homiletics, has made a case for proper presentation in his book *The Preaching Moment.* He has argued the more prepared a preacher is for delivering a sermon, the more relaxed and spontaneous he or she will come across in what he called "the preaching moment." The following statement he described as potentially paradoxical, yet one that can be confirmed with added experience:

> The sermons that are most capable of adaptation to the requirements of the
> preaching moment have been prepared in the most detailed fashion; those
> sermons that appear most spontaneously delivered have been practiced
> conscientiously and thoroughly; and those sermon that seem to be fresh and 'first-
> timely' have taken on definitive shape in the preacher's mind. (p. 67)

Bartow added that in the presentation of a sermon, preachers were often far more anxious to move from thought to thought than listeners were. With regard to ideas and images, he suggested, "Let them work on you and you on them; until you absolutely must come out with them." He emphasized the power of patience in presentation by stating, "The secret of poise is pause," and "the result of such patience will be better articulation for you and better understanding for your listeners" (pp. 79-80). Bartow acknowledged the reality of

nervousness that may accompany a "preaching moment," yet urged the preacher not to draw additional attention to anxiety:

> If we have a case of nerves we simply will have to settle ourselves by concentrating upon what we are about. Pacing, bouncing, rocking, and wild gesturing—or wiping a fevered brow that in reality is not fevered at all—may help us feel better and more relaxed; but such miscellaneous activity does not make us look relaxed, and certainly it does nothing to aid those who, it is hoped, are making some attempt to understand what we have to say. Rather, all that we do, from toe tip to hairline, ought to appear natural, and thus unobtrusive and suitable for promoting our own and our congregations' listening. (p. 94)

Barstow also distinguished between the extremes of white knuckle pulpit grabbing and the slumped, relaxed approach that can communicate indifference. Having dealt with a serious fear of public speaking, I would suggest that Bartow's insight is probably most effective in a "fine-tuning" sense as helpful for those who have learned to manage fear in most public speaking situations and are ready to take preaching to the next level.

Marguerite Shuster, Professor of Preaching and Theology, offered her thoughts on the importance of character as it relates to preaching performance. She made a strong statement that I believe represents the common person seated in a church pew:

> Certain skills will be more important to some hearers than others; certain faults will distress some hearers more than others. Some faults can be compensated for by strengths; some faults are fatal; and the lapses in performance are rarely fatal if the preacher is a person of conviction and character. (I for instance, though I inevitably notice and am greatly distracted by poor grammar, sexism, poor

68

sermon design, faulty inflection; and so on, will and do put up with them all; but if I distrust a preacher's character, I will never return, no matter how great his or her skills. (Cited in Childers and Schmit, 2008, p. 34)

Although Shuster did not specifically mention anxiety or fear as it relates to public speaking, she certainly conveyed in this statement the belief that character can compensate for nerves in the pulpit. Paul Scott Wilson, Professor of Homiletics, contributed further to this line of thought by relating it to a wholehearted commitment to Christ: "For the preacher, giving oneself to God in preaching means dying to self to live for God" (p. 48). Such a perspective is helpful in shifting feelings of fear and inadequacy (How does the audience view my performance?) to those of intimacy and love (How can I better proclaim God's love for these people?). He cited Philippians 2:5-7 to ground such a Christ-like emptying of self and applied this statement to the duty of a preacher:

Each of us humans has a misguided sense of being the center of the universe; the performance of a sermon reinforces this illusion of being at the center, and it is this illusion also that necessarily dies. In acknowledging that the role of herald is a role in service of One greater, the power of the Word is acknowledged. The Word does not die at the end of a sermon (though words as acoustic images die); the preacher's role dies as the deliverer of that Word. (p. 48)

A caution about emphasizing Christ over self was issued by Wayne McDill (1999) in *The Moment of Truth* where he wrote as follows:

You have heard prayers such as, 'Lord, let no one see this preacher today, but let everyone see Jesus.' As I have complimented the sermons of young preachers, I

69

have often been told, 'It wasn't me; it was the Lord.' My uneasiness with that view has occasionally had me say, 'Well, it wasn't *that* good'" (p. 26). McDill later made a distinction between inherent self-centeredness and a sermon led by the Holy Spirit. He substituted first-person prayers such as, "Lord, hide me behind the cross" or "Lord, just use Your servant" with a prayer for the people and by asking God to minister His word to meet their needs (p. 178). Overall, staying grounded in public speaking shifts the focus from self to others and grounds the message in a biblical way that is reliant on the Holy Spirit for power and effectiveness.

A Further Plan of Action

A final theme found among communication experts that I would like to emphasize is a strong appeal to extend principles and strategies beyond the class, course, program, or treatment experience. In the same way that a commitment to lifestyle goes beyond a crash diet, the person seeking to overcome the fear of public speaking is encouraged to build upon learning experiences and broaden their horizons. Although the fear of public speaking can be addressed in an assortment of ways, most scholars see the value of continued perseverance in their prescribed method. I will include just a few examples from literature already reviewed.

Dale Carnegie (1962) cast a vision for growth beyond his book or course material. He provided inspiration by illustrating how George Bernard Shaw became such a compelling public speaker in his day. When asked how he did this, Shaw replied, "I did it the same way I learned to skate—by doggedly making a fool of myself until I got used to it" (p. 28). As a timid teenager raised in London, Shaw apparently decided to conquer his timidity by joining the debating society. He did this to make an area of weakness his

strongest asset. Carnegie then challenged the reader with this advice: "Join organizations and volunteer for offices that will require you to speak. Stand up and assert yourself at public meetings, if only to second a motion. Don't take a back seat at departmental meetings. Speak up! Teach a Sunday school class. Become a scout leader" (pp. 28-29). He continued, "View it [public speaking] as an adventure vs. an ordeal!" (p. 29). Carnegie's enthusiastic perspective has certainly provided a vision for a future plan of action. He is not alone in this.

Janet Esposito (2000) closed her book by appealing to a broader vision along with accountability towards growth. She urged readers to encourage their thirst for growth through this testimony: "I read many books, listen to audiotapes, attend personal development seminars, and talk to people to learn directly from them. I model myself after people whom I admire and imagine myself thinking and behaving in new, expanded ways" (p. 129). Esposito then issued a challenge to embrace accountability, but did so in a vague, self-evaluative way, stating, "I will no longer accept being less than I can be. This means that I will now take more risks to stretch myself beyond my comfort zone, seeing it an opportunity for growth. Avoidance behavior, excuses, and letting myself off the hood are no longer acceptable to me" (p. 129). Although passion brings strength to her insight, the accountability aspect of her approach could be stronger if this resolve were connected to spiritual faith and perhaps to a trusted individual or group.

Betty Horwitz (2002) encouraged those who completed her class to immediately enroll in a new speaking or performance experience. Suggestions she offered include monthly follow-up provided by her course, enrollment in Toastmasters International, or for students to start their own speaking groups in their employment

71

settings. Additionally, some of her students have been referred to specialists such as psychotherapists or speech therapists when necessary. Overall, she saw improvement in most students who took her course and believed the follow-up was valuable in building upon growth and even opening up networking possibilities.

In sum, all of the above publications contributed valuable insight to help inform my project. Each of the themes—self disclosure, group support, understanding fear, addressing fear, staying grounded (biblically), and setting forth a future plan of action— presented perspective from a variety of viewpoints critical towards providing a solution towards reducing or managing the fear of public speaking. Ultimately, the information gleaned from these publications and their overlapping themes have been instrumental in creating a booklet designed to equip potential Christian leaders towards that purpose.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN

This chapter outlines a four-step project design that culminated in a manual created to address the fear of public speaking. The first step reports insights from the research analysis of Chapter Three. Steps two and three reveal new material from surveys and semi-structured interviews. Finally, step four not only provides the booklet created to address the fear of public speaking, but also includes material from that booklet used to conduct a seminar at my home church.

Step One

The insights from existing research that I found helpful in addressing the fear of public speaking were drawn mainly from the perspectives of behavioral scientists, clinical psychologists, and noteworthy voices within the field of communication. I have categorized these insights into six main clusters: Power of Self-Disclosure, Critical Nature of Support Group, Understanding Fear, Addressing Fear, Staying Grounded, and Further Plan. Because this is material that has already been reviewed in Chapter Three (Literature Review), I present it here in a concise manner that emphasizes the helpful insights gained.

Power of Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure is a critical step towards learning to manage or overcome the fear of public speaking. Research has confirmed that those with a fear of public speaking tend to avoid addressing such a fear. Many who are plagued by this fear suffer secretly and

can feel alone with this struggle. "Coming out" can be empowering, yet there are tremendous hurdles to jump before overcoming the initial shame and discomfort.

Normalizing fear is a strategy embraced by most communication experts in helping to inspire self-disclosure. The use of testimony and success stories is a pragmatic means of normalizing fear, instilling a sense of hope and emphasizing that people "are not alone in this battle." Self-assessment tools used in surveys of college-age students have consistently affirmed the normalcy of public speaking fears (Richmond, Wrench & McCroskey, 2013). Use of such surveys is believed to be helpful for those with this fear, not only to identify the level of their fear, but to convey just how common the problem is among their peers and colleagues. Ultimately, the goal in normalizing fear is to inspire self-disclosure in a way that leads to hope and a desire to manage or overcome this problem.

Critical Nature of Support Groups

Support groups were cited by many communication experts as an effective landing place for those who desire to address the fear of public speaking. Group identification, whether it be with an organization or small group, is believed to be a powerful source of encouragement and moral support when members are united by a common problem or fear. In fact, some experts believe that peer support and reassurance are more convincing than that of a teacher or professional facilitator. Engaging in such a group setting provides the safe environment needed to produce a level of stress that is helpful in desensitizing the fear of public speaking. Productive aspects of such an experience include hands-on speaking opportunities, the ability to observe others who

share the same fear as they "perform," and the benefit of appropriate feedback to effectively affirm personal growth.

Understanding Fear

Understanding the biology of fear can be instrumental in helping a person manage or overcome the fear of public speaking. When the brain perceives danger, real or imagined, information is sent to other areas of the body to prepare for "fight" or "flight." Scientific studies detail how a person's system can be triggered by the fear of public speaking, gearing up for a perceived emergency and temporarily stopping unnecessary functions. Also, distinctions can be made between trait-like and context-based fear connected to genetics, reinforcement, and situational factors. Biological insight can help a person to better understand inward or outward manifestations of fear that can be quite embarrassing in the context of public speaking. Diagnosing such a problem, physiologically speaking, can help a person understand that what the body is experiencing is a healthy function that should not be cause for shame or concern. In fact, if properly understood and addressed, a person can learn to channel such nervous energy into an asset in public speaking.

Addressing Fear

Communication experts present a wide range of suggestions about what might help in managing or overcoming the fear of public speaking. Practical insights that I find helpful include learning basic skills, being fully prepared, seizing opportunities to practice, and visualizing success. Although there is helpful information available from a clinical standpoint, such as systematic desensitization and cognitive restructuring, I would be inclined to leave the bulk of these practices to more extreme cases that have

been referred to appropriate professionals. At the same time, there are certainly insights from a clinical standpoint (positive thinking, relaxation exercises, etc.) that can be adapted into practical training to help people manage or overcome their fear.

Staying Grounded

Spiritual insight can help ground research that addresses the fear of public speaking. Although valuable insight can be gleaned from secular materials, biblical concepts should also be considered in the quest to address this problem. Essential themes that speak to the fear of public speaking in a grounding way include the nature of a preacher's calling, courageous preaching throughout the centuries, the humility of dependence, and finding power through weakness. Additional insights that I find helpful include the importance of character and dying to self, both addressed in a way that accepts that a person may never fully overcome such a fear. Ultimately, staying grounded when addressing the fear of public speaking shifts the focus from self towards a stronger reliance on faith—accepting personal weakness and humbly relying on the power and effectiveness of the Holy Spirit.

Further Plan

Almost all the communication experts seem to cast a vision that encourages continuous growth. Upon completing a course, seminar, or counseling session, people need to find ways to broaden their horizons and maintain accountability—e.g. join a support group, try out for the debating team, sign up for an experience that will provide public speaking opportunities, or commit to speaking up more in committee meetings or class, etc. In the same way that people may receive bumps and bruises learning to ride a bike, they may experience painful or embarrassing falls. However, continuously

persevering forward can stretch people beyond their comfort zone in a way that leads to personal growth in addressing their fear of public speaking.

Step Two

Step two builds upon existing data related to the fear of public speaking through the development of a questionnaire that contextualizes public speaking anxiety as it relates to Christian college and seminary students. My hope was to recruit at least one college and one seminary professor who taught public speaking related courses to administer the Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) survey[1] as well as a questionnaire I had developed myself.[2] Cooperating professors were to be informed of my vision and equipped with these research tools, which would then be taken by students anonymously. I would make myself available to administer the surveys and/or collect them. Student participants were to be informed of the intention of these surveys and told that published results would be available to them only by personal request.

Development of Research Tool

My questionnaire was specifically developed to supplement James McCroskey's Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA). My hope for the PRPSA was that it would indicate how Christian college and seminary students measured in comparison to the average results received from this highly reliable standardized survey (Daly, et al., 2009). For example, did Christian college students struggle with the fear of public speaking as commonly as the general college population? How different would the results be among current seminarians? After compiling the results, I planned to extract insights from the similarities and differences found in the new data. My hope for my own

---

[1] See Appendix 2: Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA).
[2] See Appendix 3: Addressing the Fear of Public Speaking Anxiety.

questionnaire was that I would gather additional data and glean insight from specific questions related to the fear of public speaking, such as: Do you have this fear? If so, have you found public speaking classes helpful? Do you believe that this fear might affect future career choices? These questions were intended to shed light on the level of awareness of available materials as well as on the effectiveness of public speaking courses to help students address this fear. Overall, the aim of the surveys and compiled data was to provide further insight that would help connect those with a fear of public speaking with resources that would be effective in helping them address this fear.

Challenges and Roadblocks

My greatest challenge in pursuing this plan was recruiting professors willing to participate in the project. I reached out to six different Christian college professors, including four from communication departments and two from psychology departments. Only one responded and politely declined. Fortunately, I made a pitch to two seminary professors who both responded positively and were able to administer the PRPSA and questionnaire to four classrooms of students enrolled in preaching courses. I was able to gather 49 PRPSAs and 48 fully-completed questionnaires. Having hit a roadblock with college professors, I consulted my Doctor of Ministry mentor as to whether or not I should continue pursuing this route. His response was that if I did not have a personal connection with anyone, further effort might not be the best use of my time and energy. In light of this unfortunate setback, I adjusted my original plan.

Adjusted Plan

The adjusted plan still included the utilization of the PRSPA and accompanying questionnaire. Although I was unable to receive input from Christian college students, I

found current data representing PRSPA results from college students in general could still be useful when comparing data from seminary students. And although I could not secure questionnaire results from any college students, the responses from 48 seminarians still provided valuable insight into their perceptions of available resources, as well as the overall effectiveness of public speaking courses in helping to address fear.

Research Data: Seminary vs. College Fear

Comparing results from 49 current seminary students with data compiled from several thousand general college students revealed stark differences in the levels of fear connected to public speaking. The PRSPA revealed that college students scored 10% low/moderately low, 20% moderate, and 70% percent high/very high in relation to a fear of public speaking (Richmond, et al., 2013). This same survey applied to the current group of seminary students revealed scores of 49% low/moderately low, 20% moderate, and 31% high/very high in relation to public speaking anxiety.[3] In other words, while only 10% of college students revealed low levels of fear towards public speaking, almost half of the seminary students surveyed showed low levels of anxiety—almost a 40% difference. And while 70% of college students revealed high levels of fear towards public speaking, less than a third of the seminary students surveyed showed high levels of anxiety—again, almost a 40% difference. The average score for college students was 114.6 (moderately high) in contrast to the group of current seminary students who scored an average of 94.1% (moderate). Although the seminary students represented a relatively low sample group, the differences were undeniable.

---

[3] See Appendix 4: A comparison chart showing the difference in levels of fear related to public speaking.

Research Data: Current Seminary Students

Examining the questionnaire results from current seminary students, I was able to compare and contrast data in a way that distinguished students with a fear of public speaking from those who did not. Of the 48 who completed the questionnaire[4], 27% agreed with the statement that they considered themselves to have a fear of public speaking, 67% disagreed, and 6% gave a neutral response. Interestingly, most of the seminarians who scored moderate on the PRSPA with regard to fear, identified themselves as *not* being fearful of public speaking.

Seminary Students with Fear of Public Speaking

Those who identified themselves with a fear of public speaking agreed most strongly with the statements made in questions 3, 11, 17, and 19. They agreed that public speaking courses were beneficial to most people with a high fear of public speaking; that the fear of public speaking can cause a person to avoid a potential career opportunity (highest response); that conquering the fear of public speaking is best addressed through experience; and that public speaking courses would benefit if more time and resources were devoted to the fear of public speaking. This same group disagreed most strongly with the statements made in questions 5, 6, and 14—that they were exposed to books or materials before college that were helpful in addressing the fear of public speaking (lowest response); that they had found resources in college or seminary that were helpful in addressing the fear of public speaking; and that most people with a fear of public speaking were willing to do whatever it took to conquer this fear.

---

[4] This questionnaire is attached to Appendix 3.

Seminary Students without Fear of Public Speaking

Those who identified themselves as not being fearful of public speaking agreed most strongly with the statements made in questions 3, 11, 16, and 17. They agreed that public speaking courses were beneficial to most people with a high fear of public speaking; that the fear of public speaking can cause a person to avoid a potential career opportunity; that conquering the fear of public speaking can be taught; and that conquering the fear of public speaking is best addressed through experience (highest response). This same group disagreed most strongly with the statements made in questions 2, 14, and 15. They disagreed that they were only taking this course because it was a requirement; that most people with a fear of public speaking were willing to do whatever it took to conquer this fear, and that there were certain careers that they would prefer to avoid due to expectations of public speaking (lowest response).

Agreement Between Seminary Students With and Without the Fear of Public Speaking

Noteworthy were the areas of agreement and disagreement that were shared by those who identified themselves with the fear of public speaking and those who did not. Areas that the two groups most closely agreed upon were their responses to statements made in questions 3, 11, and 17—agreeing that public speaking classes were beneficial to most people with a high fear of public speaking (closest response); that the fear of public speaking can cause a person to avoid a potential career opportunity; and that conquering the fear of public speaking was best achieved through experience.

Disagreement Between Seminary Students With and Without the Fear of Public Speaking

Where the two groups differed most was in their responses to statements made in questions 2, 5, 6, and 15. While those with a fear of public speaking were mostly neutral about taking their preaching course because it was a requirement, those not fearful of public speaking disagreed with this statement. While those with a fear of public speaking disagreed that they had been exposed to books or materials before college that were helpful in addressing the fear of public speaking, those not fearful of public speaking were closer to neutral. While those with a fear of public speaking disagreed that they had found resources in college or seminary that had been helpful in addressing the fear of public speaking, those not fearful of public speaking were again closer to neutral. And finally, while those with a fear of public speaking were solidly neutral about whether there were certain careers that they would prefer to avoid due to expectations of public speaking, those not fearful of public speaking strongly disagreed with this statement (greatest difference).

Reiterating Project Concerns

Before providing insights from the research, I would like to reiterate the concerns that initially led to my research in this area. In Chapter One I expressed the belief that there is a hidden group of men and women with great potential for Christian leadership who are missing their "calling" due to their deep-rooted fear of public speaking. Also, I expressed the belief that Christian colleges and seminaries have largely overlooked students who struggle with deep phobias in this area. Although the roadblock I experienced in recruiting Christian college professors to cooperate in this project could be

perceived as evidence that the issue is largely ignored in the classroom, I chose to accept

that there were different reasons my request was ignored (lack of a personal relationship,

busy schedules, hesitancy to get involved with research projects in general, etc.). Below

are insights that support my concerns and that can be constructive in connecting those

with a fear of public speaking with effective tools and resources.

Research Insight: Theories for Higher Public Speaking Fear in College vs. Seminary

A stark contrast was evident when comparing PRSPA results from college

students in general with a small sample of seminarian students. Why did 70% of college

students reveal a high fear of public speaking in contrast to 31% of seminarians? Or from

a different angle, why did 49% of seminarians show low levels of public speaking

anxiety in contrast to only 10% of college students? At least four theories can be offered

in response: 1) College students are by and large conquering this fear. 2) Few college

students with a fear of public speaking sense a call towards full-time Christian leadership.

3) The sample size of seminarians is too small to allow confidence in any theory. 4)

College students with a fear of public speaking are avoiding a potential call into full-time

Christian leadership. Although I cannot fully dismiss the first three theories, the data

suggests strongly that such an overwhelming difference in results confirms that the

problem is less pronounced in seminaries, and supports the theory that those with a fear

of public speaking are remaining hidden and are falling through the cracks. My

questionnaire sheds further light upon this theory.

Research Insight: Seminarians Identified with a Fear of Public Speaking

Seminarians who scored high on the PRSPA for a fear of public speaking also

identified themselves as having this fear on my questionnaire. While 31% of those taking

83

the PRSPA identified themselves as having high levels of fear connected to public speaking, 27% of the same people taking my questionnaire agreed with the statement that they had this fear. Interestingly, seminarians scored low on the PRSPA for having a fear of public speaking (49%) and were joined by a higher percentage of not having fear on my questionnaire (67%). I account for this difference by pointing out that most of those categorized as moderately fearful by the PRSPA did not perceive themselves as having a strong sense of fear in response to my survey.

Seminarians who identified themselves in my questionnaire as having a fear of public speaking responded in ways that affirmed avoidance concerns and feelings of being ignored and ill-equipped. The statement this group disagreed with most strongly, and which thus affirmed avoidance traits, was the statement that people with a fear of public speaking are willing to do whatever it takes to conquer this fear. The other two most strongly expressed disagreements were with statements that they had been exposed to helpful resources to effectively address this fear before or during their college and seminary years. Thus, their responses affirmed avoidance tendencies in addressing fear and highlighted the fact that they perceived a lack of education about the issue in their schooling backgrounds.

At the same time, seminarians who identified themselves as having a fear of public speaking nevertheless saw hope in addressing this problem. Of the four statements this group agreed with most strongly, one was that this fear can cause a person to avoid a potential career opportunity. However, the other three statements they agreed with most demonstrated hope for a solution. These statements concerned the benefits of taking a public speaking course, the idea that conquering this fear is best achieved through

experience, and the claim that public speaking courses would benefit if more time and resources were devoted to addressing this fear. Thus, despite feelings of being ignored or ill-equipped, seminarians with a fear of public speaking still saw hope for addressing this problem.

Research Insight: Seminarians Identified without a Fear of Public Speaking

Seminarians who identified themselves in my questionnaire as not having a fear of public speaking also saw fear as a problem that could be effectively addressed. Of the four statements this group agreed with most strongly, one was that the fear of public speaking can cause a person to avoid a potential career opportunity. However, the other three statements they agreed with most also demonstrated hope that this was a problem that not only could be taught, but that could be addressed through course work and hands-on experience.

Furthermore, seminarians who identified themselves as not having a fear of public speaking responded in ways that disregarded avoidance issues for themselves while recognizing real challenges for those who possess this fear. They disagreed adamantly that they had taken their preaching course only because it was mandatory and that there were certain careers they might avoid due to public speaking expectations. However, they also affirmed avoidance issues by disagreeing with the statement that those with a fear of public speaking were willing to do whatever it took to conquer such a fear. Ultimately, seminarians both with and without a fear of public speaking, agreed closely that avoidance is a serious issue for those with a fear of public speaking, yet together expressed the feeling that there is hope when it comes to addressing this concern.

Research Insight: Seminarians with Fear vs. Seminarians without Fear

Seminarians with and seminarians without a fear of public speaking differed widely in response to my questionnaire in two areas: 1) that avoidance is an issue in their own personal lives; and 2) that effective resources for addressing this fear are readily available. While only 2 of 32 seminarians who did not fear public speaking disagreed with the statement that they were only taking this preaching class because it was a requirement, less than half of those who feared public speaking disagreed with the same statement. And while all but one seminarian who did not fear public speaking strongly disagreed public speaking expectations might affect future career choices, more than two thirds of students with a fear of public speaking did not disagree with the same statement. With regard to the perception of resources available to address the fear of public speaking, those with a fear of public speaking were unified in the view that effective resources were lacking, while those who did not have a fear for public speaking expressed neutrality about the same statement.

Overall, while avoidance issues seem obvious to both groups with regard to the fear of public speaking, data suggests that those with a fear of public speaking have a stronger awareness of a lack of effective resources to address their fear. Fortunately, despite avoidance issues and a perceived lack of resources, seminarians with a fear of public speaking seem amenable to the idea of becoming connected to effective resources and tools to address this fear.

Step Three

Step three presents insights gained from semi-structured interviews with Christian leaders who have learned to manage the fear of public speaking or are still in the process

86

of addressing this fear. My hope was to secure phone interviews with 5-12 individuals, such as pastors, teachers, and ministry coordinators, who would represent a blend of Christian leadership positions that involve speaking engagements. I approached 14 different people based upon challenges they had self-disclosed in terms of public speaking anxiety and pitched my vision for this project and my desire that they would participate. Eight leaders committed to the project and signed consent forms. They were made aware of the interview process and sent a copy of the questions that would be asked in advance.[5] I made a commitment to keep their identities anonymous and communicated my intention to use their material in this dissertation paper, a manual, and possible future workshops. Of the eight who returned a consent form, seven followed through with the interview. They were all told that they would be given access to my research results upon request. Below is a synopsis of each interview, together with insights and solutions the interviewees recommended from personal experience as well as their assessment of resource material available to potential ministry candidates.

Author/Public Speaker

The first interviewee was a Christian author who has written several books that have taken her across the country and overseas to speak at retreats, present workshops and lectures, and engage in forum discussions around her area of expertise. Many would be surprised to learn that this accomplished writer grew up terrified of giving a public address. Some of this fear she attributed to shyness ingrained in her temperament, and she recalled that her reticence as a youth was most challenged when she was forced to speak publically in classroom settings. She still cringes when describing what she calls a

---

[5] See Appendix 5: Addressing the Fear of Public Speaking Anxiety phone interview.

survival experience when forced to speak in classroom settings—becoming almost sick, trembling, shaking, and her stomach in knots. Because of this fear, she avoided at all costs high school and college classes that involved public presentations. In fact, she admitted that as an undergraduate student this fear governed her choice of major. Rather than pursuing her heart's desire for an advanced degree in literature, she applied her major to elementary education. This does not reflect a negative view of elementary education, but rather that she knew deep down that she was choosing this route to avoid any potential interaction that might involve speaking in front of adults. Interestingly, she revealed that her fear of public speaking and the avoidance patterns that accompanied this fear may have turned her to writing.

This author can specifically point to a moment in time when she was forced to deal with her fear of public speaking. As a relatively young wife and mother, she hosted a Young Life Bible study for teenage girls in her home. The class was led by a close friend with the ability to engage with adolescents in a dynamic way. On the last evening of a season of Bible study, her friend announced to the group that she would no longer be able to lead. She followed up this potentially shattering piece of news with the encouragement that they would still be able to meet because her friend, the host, would certainly be able to take over leadership. Blindsided by the surprise announcement, the author recalled feeling a dark cloud coming over her and hearing an internal voice say, "I can't, but it's too late. This has already been announced." Thrust into a situation she would not have chosen, she was forced to address her crippling fear by committing to leading this Young Life Bible study for teenage girls. This was the initial pattern in learning to face this fear—she was incrementally forced out of her comfort zone and made to meet

88

undesirable expectations. She identified her biggest jump as having to speak about her published books.

This author was helpful in identifying tools and strategies that have aided her along the way as she has progressively learned to manage her fear of public speaking. At first she stressed that she had never had a teacher or joined a course at any level that had helped her in this journey and that the reason for this was probably her commitment to complete avoidance as a student. She then corrected herself by recalling a secular course she took when coerced into leading the Young Life Bible study. The course was entitled "How to Teach Great Books by Asking Great Questions." She described it as an excellent course and felt it helped equip her with an approach she still uses today. The focus of a Bible study or book presentation becomes questions that draw out responses rather than a lecture. With regard to a strategy for managing her fear of public speaking, she has learned that when she is prepared, confidence and good presentation go hand in hand. She spoke of the power found in choice of words and emphasized that if she believed in what she had to say and arrived at a speaking engagement well prepared, for the most part she left very satisfied. To this day she feels as though she has been forced into every single speaking situation and that competence has led to confidence. One final word this author wanted to add had to do with faith. She believed firmly that without a sense of God's plan and obedience to that plan, she would never have "gone there." And she concluded the interview by stating, "This is all part of the walk that God has placed before me and the Holy Spirit convicting and equipping is the key part of my story."

Pastor/Foreign Missionary

The second interviewee was a senior pastor who has also served as leader of a team of foreign missionaries. He preaches weekly and within his denomination has been called upon regularly to preach, teach, and train leaders in a variety of settings and formats. Although most would view him as a competent and confident public speaker, he still considers himself to have an active fear of public speaking. He described himself as shy as a kid and not wanting to be in the public eye at all. As an elementary student he experienced no real social awkwardness among his peers. However, as he grew older, he became very conscious of the difficulties he experienced trying to express himself in the classroom and in group discussions. He remembered quite vividly the day he failed a physics test in junior high school. The teacher wanted to offer a second chance and called him forward in front of the class to redeem himself. This pastor recalled emphatically, "It was a disaster! I was exposed and flunked the oral exam!" He described this experience as an event that he still wrestles with to this day. Although he has learned to somewhat manage his fear of public speaking, he wanted to make it clear that he has yet to overcome it fully.

As this pastor grew into adulthood, the fear of public speaking lingered. He described his ongoing fear as "not just fear, but trepidation, unreasonable, intensified fear that simply exists." When he first felt a calling towards foreign missions, he knew that it might include public speaking, so he began to consider the possibility of being a pilot instead. Eventually he caved towards his perceived ministry calling and entered seminary. As he described it, he "bit the bullet, finding preaching courses to be an awful experience." When pressed about whether or not he had found any part of his preaching

courses helpful, he recalled a preaching clinic in seminary that provided him with a small level of hope. Through watching videotapes of himself preaching he discovered what he was experiencing on the inside was not fully evident to the observer. In fact, he felt he looked fairly confident on tape. Thus he began to focus on refining the appearance of seeming confident in the belief that most people would be unable to see the fear that he continued to harbor within. One by-product, he believed, of taking this approach, was his struggle with cotton mouth. He vaguely remembered talking with a professor about this and receiving advice to clench his teeth together to help produce extra saliva. Overall, he felt as though seminary may have addressed the fear of public speaking marginally in preaching courses, but that he did not receive any great insights personally. And although he was aware of peers who seemed to have conquered certain levels of fear, his own fear of public speaking was by no means addressed in depth or comprehensively.

About a decade ago this pastor took an online course in an attempt to address his fear of public speaking and the accompanying pain. This course exposed him to theophostic healing therapy, which in his words, was a ministry approach "designed to shine a light on hurt memories of the past." As he worked through the online learning program, he was instructed to take himself to the memory place where he had been hurt and visualize Jesus being there for him. He did his best to follow all instruction and even took an oral exam. Unfortunately, he did not feel this course brought full healing and wondered if it may have helped more if he had experienced it with a live instructor.

Ultimately, this pastor believed that communication is critical in Christian leadership and was frustrated with himself for continuing to avoid certain public speaking aspects of leadership. Although he affirmed that he has become a strong preacher, he

91

attributed this to being able to own biblical material and confidently deliver it. At the same time, he said he feels frustrated, even handicapped, to this day, by his inability to speak out at denominational meetings. He shared that not once in almost three decades as an ordained pastor, has he spoken on the floor at a Synod meeting. He believed there were issues where he could provide valuable input, but that his fear of public speaking had kept him from joining the discussion. In general, this pastor agreed that he had been faithful in responding to God's calling in his life and had found that God was always faithful to provide. At the same time, he still lives with the tension of this fear and was curious to see where this study might lead me and interested to listen to any insights I may discover.

Local Mission Coordinator

The third interviewee was a local mission coordinator who was forced to address the fear of public speaking more recently. She recalled being comfortable with public speaking at a younger age—participating in drama, leading clubs, and for the most part feeling confident about sharing in front of others all the way through high school. In fact, she felt as though most of her adult life she had not experienced much fear as long as she believed in a project or was confident with a product. However, her most recent job position initially caused her great concern. As a coordinator for a local Christian mission organization, she was given responsibility for recruiting volunteers. Although she felt confident her skill set was suitable for this type of work, she did not anticipate the nervousness that she would feel in the early weeks and months as she gave presentations to local churches, schools, and organizations. As she was attempting a sales pitch for her new organization, she found herself dealing with dry mouth, racing thoughts, and

embarrassing perspiration. She attributed this fear to having to share in front of people she knew. The mission organization was in the community she grew up in and suddenly she found herself intimidated by thoughts about not wanting to sound stupid in front of family, friends and peers. There was one incident where she was invited to attend a community event and found out upon arrival that she was the program. This local mission coordinator adjusted quickly to her new role, however, and now has insight into how she was able to manage her unexpected fear.

She attributes management of her public speaking fear to "knowledge and props" and now has a much firmer grasp of the mission of her new organization. She equips herself for every speaking engagement with a PowerPoint outline to help ground her message. Her advice about adjusting to unanticipated speaking engagements, such as the time she found out on arrival that she was the program, is to map out a quick outline. She said that if a person has a grasp of the material (knowledge) and props to get through the material, they should be able to give a solid thirty minute speech even with last minute preparation. Finally, she has found prayer to be helpful in her new role as she prepares diligently for each speaking opportunity and then places it in the Lord's hands.

Youth Pastor

The fourth interviewee was a veteran youth pastor known for his engaging youth talks and who has been the chair of a network of youth leaders in his region. Most who know him view his leadership as rock solid and feel comfortable joking around with him. Although he is presently quite confident as a speaker in a variety of formats and settings, he can point to a specific moment that sparked an escalation of fear in relation to public speaking. It was the freshman year of his high school experience. Motivated by a desire

to be class clown, he decided to dress in character for an oral report in English class. In the midst of his presentation, for the first time he found himself becoming nervous about a speech and fainted. This led to progressively stronger feelings of fear, nearly debilitating him each time he had to face a new public speaking situation. He began to loath first time events and fainted on several occasions—his first Scripture reading in church, his first sermon, and his first time officiating a wedding (to name just a few). He recalled feeling horrible each time and was desperately aware this was a problem that needed solving. New situations would work him into such a frenzy that his fear of fainting in first time situations became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This youth pastor believed he hit a crossroads when asked to officiate for the first time at a funeral service. This is where he felt the pattern needed to stop. Another fainting episode, he felt, would ruin any chance of a meaningful service. He recalled seeing a doctor, who confirmed that he possessed low blood pressure, but at the same time suggested that the fainting pattern was primarily a mental issue. With the funeral service at hand, he remembered crying out to God, "Do this for me because I can't do it on my own." Fortunately, he made it through the funeral service standing and has not had a fainting episode since. Although he did not interpret that incident as curing him of the fear of public speaking, he did believe it was his first step along a path of significant spiritual growth. He recalled doing a lot of "self-talk" as he progressively matured in this area. "It's not about you, it's not a big deal, it's about what you're doing, and you don't have to be perfect." He felt this self-talk was instrumental in helping him deal with truths, reality, and bring his fear before God.

This youth pastor felt as though seminary played a significant role in helping him address his fear of public speaking. Although he felt preaching courses addressed his fear only in a general sense, a comment made by a professor struck him in a powerful way. On the first day of a mandatory preaching class, his professor made a comment about the challenges of a preacher stating, "If you don't feel uneasy, you maybe shouldn't be in ministry and you're maybe not relying enough on the Spirit of God." He recalled being immediately drawn to this professor and finding him to be the type of mentor who could put him at ease, instill a smaller sense of self, and help draw out a better sense of humor about the fear that had become so consuming in his ministry. Although not certain whether or not any seminary curriculum specifically addressed the fear of public speaking, this youth pastor felt fortunate that the Lord had placed a compassionate figure in his life during seminary to help him feel safe.

This youth pastor also felt his church family played a significant role in helping him address his fear of public speaking. When asked if this fear ever affected his thinking with regard to his career or God's calling in his life, he responded immediately, "Yes, for sure!" Although he was able to gain control of the fainting spells, he would consciously and sometimes subconsciously put limits on the places he was willing to go. He had never fainted in front of students, so naturally he felt he should stick to the "youth thing" as that would be his place of safety. However, his church family kept giving him new opportunities and providing a genuinely safe place for these to play out. He said that even in the midst of his fainting incidents, the church folks always made light of it—laughing, giving jabs, but never at his expense and in a familial type of way. Overall, this youth pastor felt he had successfully learned to manage his fear of public speaking. He realized

new situations might still bring with them a certain level of anxiety, yet he no longer agonized as much about how they might go wrong.

Senior Pastor

The fifth interviewee was a pastor who was Head of Staff in a relatively large church and a leader in his community. As a student in a Christian liberal arts school of over two thousands students, he was twice president of his class. What most people did not know at the time was that he was terribly afraid of public speaking. He once had to lead a class chapel and can recall "white knuckling" it—sweating, trembling, losing his train of thought and wondering if he should continue in the moment. This incident drove him away from ministry. He became a teacher and felt as though the interactive aspect of teaching made public speaking easier. Although he learned to manage his fear within the context of public education, he felt he not he was not following God's will. Eventually this senior pastor made the shift to church ministry by becoming a youth pastor, and over time has been able to manage his fear connected to public speaking.

This senior pastor felt as though maturity and coming to terms with God's calling were the two major factors that helped him address his fear of public speaking. He felt college and seminary had very little impact in teaching him to face this fear, acknowledging how at that stage in his life he would simply exercise the discipline of getting up front when required. He recalled as a youth pastor taking a seminar led by Burt Decker, a public speaking guru who had coached presidents, and feeling the experience was helpful for organizing his thoughts to reduce anxiety. However, the "ah-ha" moment came as a senior pastor in what he described as an epiphany. The thought suddenly struck him that his public speaking anxiety was rooted in pride—he was not willing to be

embarrassed and wanted people to think well of him, This senior pastor believed that as he began to submit his desire to manage his image and people's perception of him, he overcame 90% of this fear. Ultimately, his growth in overcoming most of his public speaking anxiety was not due to strategy or curriculum, but the joy he found in surrendering his pride in this area to the Lord.

Retired Senior Pastor

This interviewee was a retired pastor who has served as the Head of Staff in a relatively large church and who continues to serve in leadership positions within his denomination. He recalled his first experience of public speaking as a junior high campaign for class president. As he stood in front of the student body to speak from his notes written out on a card, he became too nervous to turn over the card. After standing in silence for an awkward period of time, he finally left the stage without finishing his speech. A similar incident occurred in his freshman year in high school. He was in the homeroom office reading a speech over the intercom and became absolutely stymied— hands shaking, thoughts racing, and frozen in a way that made him fearful to move. The two incidents combined made him nervous about ever speaking publically again. However, in his sophomore year at high school he was asked to lead the singing and announce the next songs in the program. He felt this helped him to become more relaxed on the public stage and although the fear still existed, he was better able to manage his nerves.

This retired pastor did not recall being exposed to any resources or guidance in his formal education to address his fear of public speaking. In fact, he remembered vividly an experience in a preaching class in seminary in which he was mocked by his professor.

Apparently he gave a sermon on the power of the Holy Spirit without showing much personality. He recalled being nervous, not traumatically so, but enough to work his way through the sermon material in a monotone voice. Immediately afterwards, the professor stepped forward before the class, and in an exaggeratedly limp voice began chanting, "Isn't this exciting? You too can have the power of the Holy Spirit." Fortunately, this retired pastor can now see humor in the incident and does not look back with any harsh feelings or deep wounds.

This interviewee believed that he learned to manage his fear of public speaking simply by being faithful. He did not consider himself a great preacher, but always committed himself to being faithful to the text—"getting the information emphasized over a preoccupation with method or style." He believed that what helped most was not trying to hit a home run or put pressure on himself. This mentality he attributed to being spiritually moved in his life by sincere pastors who had a sense of proportion and no need to impress. He also expressed gratitude for his strength of calling. When called upon to give a talk or lead a group, he found himself doing what he had to do. Ultimately, this retired senior pastor seems to have addressed his fear of public through embracing humility and obedience to God's calling on his life.

Public Relations Director

The last interviewee was a professional consultant and professing Christian who had served in a variety of roles in the professional world, including mentoring people in the NASCAR sports arena. He talked about being in charge of media training for professional race car drivers and emphasized, "One emotional comment about that 'cruddy Ford' in front of a national audience can jeopardize a $20 million sponsorship

98

and compromise the brand." This professional consultant received his big break at the age of 36 as a result of a national announcement made on television after a race. He recalled that those 90 seconds of fame brought with them a sudden barrage of job offers. It would thus be a surprise for most to learn that this former public relations director grew up with a tremendous fear of public speaking.

He attributed his childhood fear of public speaking to the old-school approach to teaching that was prevalent when he was young. He recalled that one method of motivation employed by some of his elementary and primary school teachers was to embarrass people and mess with their psyches. Being the type of student who regularly came to classes unprepared, he remembered being used as an example—something he considered both effective and cruel. Although he believed this method led to his fear of public speaking, he eventually learned how to manage this fear.

This interviewee gave credit to a college class and a mentor for helping him effectively address his fear of public speaking. He attended a state school and avoided public speaking courses until his junior year. Reluctantly he took the course and found himself feeling pleasantly blessed by a charismatic professor who showed interest in helping him to grow. When pressed about how influential the course had been in helping him with his fear, he responded that he gave 75% credit to the course and 25% to the professor. He remembered giving three or four speeches, writing a paper, and researching clinical studies that included a piece on Hitler's style of speech (his oratorical gift of being able to move a group of people—even if in the direction of evil). This consultant recalled sprinting around the block minutes before one of his speeches to get his heart rate up, because he had learned that this could help lessen the initial surge of adrenaline

99

experienced by those fighting nerves while giving a speech. The material that spoke to him most in this class was learning how to command a room—owning the material, embracing the attitude that you are the expert, and gaining confidence through the recognition that there is a roomful of people with eyes upon you because you "know your stuff." Additionally, he said he learned the value of getting in touch with an audience: "If your audience knows or loves you, there is the opportunity to become one with the room." Interestingly, upon completing his degree, he received a phone call from his former public speaking professor with this comment and request: "You are the most fearful student I've ever taught. I've watched you progress. Would you like to teach summer class?" This led to him teach the first summer series. Ultimately, this interviewee felt grateful for having conquered his fear of public speaking and believed that it was his most valuable asset towards advancement in the professional world.

Overall, I found these interviews to be useful towards addressing the fear of public speaking from a subjective angle. Stories can connect with person differently than objective facts and data. Presenting a person's testimony has the potential to resonate with people in powerful, even life-changing ways. The above interviews told real-life stories in a way that gave insight into the root of public speaking fear as well as hope towards a solution. I have chosen to use segments of these interviews as a central feature in my booklet designed to address the fear of public speaking. My desire is for them to not only tell a story, but be an effective connecting point in my quest to help others reduce or manage their fear.

Step Four

Step four presents the finished product of a booklet[6] designed to address the fear of public speaking. This booklet was adapted into PowerPoint for a seminar conducted at the First Presbyterian Church of Mooresville, NC, on December 22, 2015. Project outcomes are reflected on in Chapter Five.

---

[6] The booklet is attached in Appendix 6.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTCOMES

Chapter One established my concern that there is a hidden group of Christians with leadership potential slipping through the cracks because of an unaddressed fear of public speaking. Chapter Two presented a theological framework for this problem. Chapter Three encompassed a literature review of a range of available resources that address the fear of public speaking. Chapter Four outlined a four-step project design for a booklet and seminar to address this concern. The final task in this chapter is to reflect upon the outcomes of the project. The fear of public speaking should not hinder potential Christian leaders from entering ministry. It is a problem that can be reduced and managed. The booklet and seminar are tools that I hope to incorporate into my future vision for ministry with those who struggle with a fear of public speaking. Outlined below are conclusions and recommendations related to the project results in both of these outcome areas.

Project Results: The Booklet

Although pleased with the outcome of the booklet, I found the development of this resource a daunting task. The initial mass of research information felt like a formless lump of clay. There was a solid base of statistical data exposing a widespread fear of public speaking, yet the variety of possible angles from which to address the problem seemed less than satisfying. After months of analyzing and praying over the mass of material, I felt led to cut deep as I sculpted hundreds of pages of research into a finished product of 33 pages. I believe the booklet to be a perfect size, providing practical insight

based on a solid, biblical grounding. Below are the details of how this booklet gradually took shape.

Studies and Statistics Drove the Research

Statistical data and survey results affirmed the fear of public speaking is a problem in our culture and inspired me to dig deeper. Most research data placed public speaking fear at the top of fear lists and near the 40% mark for those who score high for having this fear. This needed to be reflected in the booklet. People with this fear need to see it is a common problem in our culture and to recognize that they are not alone. As the widespread nature of the problem became increasingly clear, I began to dig deeper into what might be causing such fear. At a personal level, having grown up with a fear of public speaking, I considered my "condition" abnormal and its manifestations extreme. As I unearthed insights from ongoing research, I gained a deeper understanding of how the fear of public speaking and the struggle to manage it can be healthy if viewed through the proper lens. This too needed to be reflected in the booklet. In other words, the struggle is not only common (the sufferer is not alone), but normal (he or she is reacting to fear signals the way any healthy human being would react). People with this fear need to understand that addressing it will stretch them beyond their comfort zone and may cause undesirable levels of angst or even shame. The existing research eventually led me to create a new research tool that allowed me to ask my own questions and probe more specifically into the area of ministry and those who might be avoiding a potential ministry call. As I gathered new insights from my own research tool and from interviews, I was struck by the power of personal testimonies. These, I realized, might be the key to connecting readers with valuable insights for addressing their fear of public speaking.

Testimonies Impacted the Format

As the wealth of information began to mount, I grew convinced that the booklet would be most effective through the use of story. Although the statistical data and research results were informative and interesting, personal testimony became a game changer. My 15-20 minute semi-structured interviews led to hour-long post-interview conversations with many of the interviewees. They wanted to know more about my research progress and were curious about my story and how I came to address this fear in my life. When friends or family inquired about my research progress, they seemed to connect most easily with the stories I told from the interviews or the insights I had gained from my own personal experience. When parishioners from my church heard the title of my thesis-project, many were shocked to learn that this had ever been a problem in my life and expressed a fascination with my journey. Countless people who are aware of my research asked me "the secret" to overcoming this fear in my own life and were also curious about the stories of those with whom I had come in contact. With this in mind, I decided to introduce each chapter of my booklet with a personal testimony in the hope of connecting with the reader. In addition, I incorporated biblical research to enrich the testimonial aspect of my research, and more importantly, provide a valuable grounding for my booklet.

Scripture Grounded All Major Themes and Conclusions

Ultimately I came to the conclusion that the Bible provides the most valuable resource for addressing the fear of public speaking. I therefore committed every major theme and conclusion in my booklet towards being grounded in scripture. For example, a sense of calling is central to every growing follower of Christ. Scripture grounds the

theology of a calling and provides personal examples of those who struggled to embrace the public speaking aspects of a ministry calling. Moses used his lack of eloquence as an excuse and Paul acknowledged both his nerves and his limitations as a public orator.

Biblical conclusions also provide a perspective that can produce spiritual peace and growth. For example, as people learn to accept their human weakness ("thorn in the flesh" and "jars of clay"), they come to depend more on Christ to fulfill their ministry calling. Interestingly, I found that practical insights, even those from a secular perspective, seemed to gain value when grounded in a biblical perspective. For example, the opening quotation I chose for the booklet was written by a non-believer: "Understanding fear changes our lives in extremes ways, but nobody ever teaches us about this basic, primal emotion. I don't recall a single lesson about fear from preschool up to graduate school. More importantly, most of us know very little about how to deal with fear when it stands in our way" (Yogis 2013, 1). This quotation should resonate with anyone with a fear of public speaking. It can inspire researchers in many fields—science, psychology, religion, etc.—to dig deeper. However, Scripture has the unique ability to ground all other insights and enrich their value. Understanding the science behind the way our bodies are wired fits beautifully with a biblical Creator who has hardwired us to respond to danger with appropriate biological responses. Overall, my booklet incorporates practical material that is formatted in a style that should connect with the reader and that is grounded in a way that will provide a valuable, life-changing perspective.

Project Results: The Seminar

The seminar was designed to gather feedback on the booklet. I created a PowerPoint presentation outlining all five chapters of the booklet. This was presented to a group of 25-30 people in the fellowship hall of my church, the First Presbyterian Church of Mooresville, NC, on Tuesday, December 22, 2015. The presentation was approximately 90 minutes in duration and 22 people filled out feedback forms. From these I gathered their input on the themes of the booklet and their overall reaction to the presentation. I emphasized the need for constructive criticism and communicated my gratitude for the safe environment they had provided. Although the overall response was positive, there were also constructive suggestions that were useful for future improvement.

Positive Feedback

The response to the PowerPoint presentation confirmed the need for the project and affirmed the effectiveness of the approach followed. Several people, young and old, revealed their struggles with the fear of public speaking and expressed their desire that I develop this material further and make it available to others. Suggested outlets included children's workshops in our church, Christian colleges and seminaries, public schools in town (if allowed), and venues within the community such as the library or community center. Comments that resonated with me were, "That seemed quicker than ninety minutes," "You were speaking directly to me," "I wish I had heard this when I was younger," and "Although I'm eighty-seven, I now feel inspired to deal with my fear of public speaking." One person in particular, a retired pastor, shared that my story was exactly the same as his. He felt my sincerity and vulnerability resonated with the

106

audience and would be effective in most settings. Most liked my approach of normalizing the problem and responded well to the humorous quotations and assortment of testimonies. They were intrigued by some of the notable figures and celebrities who have shared in this struggle and enjoyed some of the stories I told to expound upon a few of these. Many commended my use of biblical insight and affirmed my use of Moses, Jonah, and the apostle Paul. One person noted: "I always viewed Paul as confident and bold. You showed a different side to his vulnerabilities in public speaking that took me by surprise. I'm impressed by your use of Scripture to bring practical insight to such a common problem in our culture." Overall, I was sufficiently encouraged by the positive feedback to consider fine-tuning and developing the presentation for future venues.

Constructive Suggestions

The critique of my PowerPoint presentation was constructive in helping me see improvements that could be made. Solid feedback for potential adjustments included content, editing concerns, and suggestions for improvement of the actual presentation. With regard to content, I heard, "We love your use of the Bible. Use even more Bible! Continue to develop these themes and use additional people from the Bible if possible." Several would have liked me to develop more fully practical suggestions to help with jitters such as breathing techniques and visualization. There was a crew of educators in my audience who picked out various grammatical errors and misspellings. They were politely firm that just a few mistakes can detract from an effective presentation. A retired biologist who has taught public speaking suggested that I add a little color to the slides and incorporate additional images with the text. Probably the most common response was the suggestion that I engage more with the room—probe the audience, ask questions,

break into small groups, etc. One of the suggestions that resonated with me most was to consider developing a more detailed presentation that could be offered as a class or full day workshop. These responses all helped expand my thinking with regard to future presentations.

Considerations for Future Presentations

Having processed the constructive feedback, I plan to make a few adjustments and develop at least three different presentations. Most of the adjustments will be made to a one-day, 90 minute presentation similar to the one I gave at church. I plan to clean up a few grammatical errors and implement more visual images. The format will be similar, because it would be difficult to incorporate much more group interaction and still keep it within a two-hour window. My thought for future seminars would be to retain the current material and incorporate a 15-20 minute Q & A at the end. Also, I plan to develop a second presentation in the form of a day-long workshop. This will allow me to incorporate more detailed information and include class interaction and small group time. I envision this workshop taking 5-6 hours with a break in the middle. Lastly, my vision would be to develop a 6-8 week course that could be taught at a high school, college or seminary. Here the booklet would function as a base and would incorporate a syllabus, a developed PowerPoint presentation, interactive lessons in class, and use of guest speakers. Ultimately I hope to build upon both the seminar and booklet and use them as tools in future ministry.

<div align="center">

Future Recommendations

</div>

The reason I chose to research the fear of public speaking is because this topic has been neglected by Christian colleges and seminaries. As expressed in the opening chapter

of this thesis, very little insight or guidance was offered to me as a student, and when I started researching, it was almost impossible to find relevant material on the shelves of a Christian seminary library. With this in mind, I have a vision to develop my project outcomes in a way that can help potential Christian leaders with a fear of public speaking to address their fear.

Ministry Vision

I would love to see my booklet in the hands of potential Christian leaders with a fear of public speaking. I envision this material being used in Christian high schools, colleges, and seminaries around the country. My desire would be that teachers and professors recognize the scope of this problem and apply a biblical approach when addressing vulnerable students in their classrooms. Additionally, I would like to be able present this material to a variety of local groups that would include my church, secondary schools, a community college in town, and the Mooresville population in general.

Implementing Ministry Vision

My plan for implementing this ministry vision is to circulate a published booklet and make myself available for local workshops and potentially also for larger venues further afield. With regard to the publishing of the booklet, I will begin by consulting family members and mentors with experience and success in the publishing world. If I can produce a bound publication of the booklet, I will distribute free copies to major Christian colleges and seminaries around the country. I will also inquire at my denominational office about venues for regional workshops and book tables. If I attain success at a denominational level, I will expand the range and contact broader conferences such as the National Youth Workers Convention and Catalyst. Locally, I will

begin with my strongest connections. I will approach the Principal of our local High School and Superintendent of our local public school system, both of whom attend our church. I will also approach the teacher of a Bible class that is offered at our local public high school. Our church's Christian Education Director has already expressed an interest in workshops for our children and I will approach the local library and community center as well. Ultimately, my goal is to connect potential Christian leaders who struggle with a fear of public speaking with the right material to help them address this fear in an effective way.

The fear of public speaking is normal, yet it keeps too many of our potential ministry leaders on the bench. My desire in this project has been to create a resource that can effectively help those with a fear of public speaking to address their fear. With God's help I have taken some significant steps towards that goal. Thanks be to God who can transform our weakness to display His strength!

PERSONAL REPORT OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION-24 (PRCA-24)

Directions: This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning feelings about communicating with other people. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are undecided, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly agree. Work quickly; record your first impression.

_____ 1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
_____ 2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussion.
_____ 3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
_____ 4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
_____ 5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
_____ 6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
_____ 7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
_____ 8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.
_____ 9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.
_____ 10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
_____ 11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
_____ 12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
_____ 13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
_____ 14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
_____ 15. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
_____ 16. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
_____ 17. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
_____ 18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.
_____ 19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
_____ 20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am giving a speech.
_____ 21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
_____ 22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
_____ 23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
_____ 24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

COMPUTING SCORE FOR PRCA-24
SCORING: To compute context sub scores begin with a score of 18 for each context and follow the instructions below.

1. Group discussion: Add scores for items 2, 4, and 6. Subtract scores for items 1, 3, and 5. Scores can range from 6 to 30.
2. Meetings: Add scores for items 8, 9, and 12. Subtract scores from items 7, 10, and 11. Scores can range from 6 to 30.

3. Interpersonal: Add scores for items 14, 16, and 17. Subtract scores for items 13, 15, and 18. Scores can range for 6 to 30.
4. Public speaking: Add scores for items 19, 21, and 23. Subtract scores for items 20, 22, and 24. Scores can range from 6 to 30.

To compute the total score for the PRCA-24, add the four sub scores. Total scores can range from 24 to 120. Scores about 80 = high CA; below 50 = low CA.

PERSONAL REPORT OF PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY (PRPSA)

Below are 34 statements that people sometimes make about themselves. Please indicate whether or not you believe each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

____ 1. While preparing for giving a speech, I feel tense and nervous.

____ 2. I feel tense when I see the words "speech" and "public speech" on a course outline when studying.

____ 3. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.

____ 4. Right after giving a speech I feel that I have had a pleasant experience.

____ 5. I get anxious when I think about a speech coming up.

____ 6. I have no fear of giving a speech.

____ 7. Although I am nervous just before starting a speech, I soon settle down after starting and feel calm and comfortable.

____ 8. I look forward to giving a speech.

____ 9. When the instructor announces a speaking assignment in class, I can feel myself getting tense.

____ 10. My hands tremble when I am giving a speech.

____ 11. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.

____ 12. I enjoy preparing for a speech.

____ 13. I am in constant fear of forgetting what I prepared to say.

____ 14. I get anxious if someone asks me something about my topic that I don't know.

____ 15. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.

____ 16. I feel that I am in complete possession of myself while giving a speech.

____ 17. My mind is clear when giving a speech.

____ 18. I do not dread giving a speech.

____ 19. I perspire just before staring a speech.

____ 20. My heart beats very fast just as I start a speech.

____ 21. I experience considerable anxiety while sitting in the room just before my speech starts.

____ 22. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.

____ 23. Realizing that only a little time remains in a speech makes me tense and anxious.

____ 24. While giving a speech, I know I can control my feelings of tension and stress.

____ 25. I breathe faster just before starting a speech.

____ 26. I feel comfortable and relaxed in the hour or so just before giving a speech.

____ 27. I do poorer on speeches because I am anxious.

____ 28. I feel anxious when the teacher announces the date of a speaking assignment.

____ 29. When I make a mistake while giving a speech, I find it hard to concentrate on the parts that follow.

_____ 30. During an important speech I experience a feeling of helplessness building up inside me.

_____ 31. I have trouble falling asleep the night before a speech.

_____ 32. My heart beats very fast while I present a speech.

_____ 33. I feel anxious while waiting to give my speech.

_____ 34. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

SCORING: To compute your scores follow the instructions below:

1. Public Speaking Anxiety
   Step One. Add scores for items 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, and 34.
   Step Two. Add scores for items 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, and 26.
   Step Three. Complete the following formula:

   PHPSA = 72 – Total from Step 2 + Total from Step 1

INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE

Your score should be between 34 and 170. If your score is below 34 or above 170, you have made a mistake in computing the score.

- High = > 131
- Low = < 98
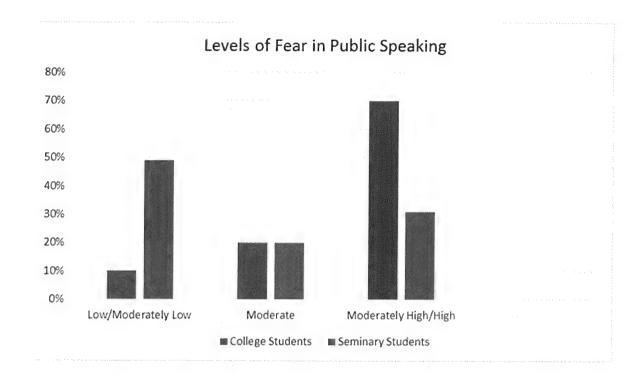- Moderate = 98 to 131
- Mean = 114.6; SD = 17.2

APPENDIX 3

ADDRESSING THE FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY

Developed by David F. Rockness

*Respond to each statement below by indicating your opinion of how it relates to your thoughts and experience. Mark the number that most accurately reflects whether you:

Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5

_____1. I consider myself to have a fear of public speaking.

_____2. I am only taking this course because it is a requirement.

_____3. I believe public speaking classes are beneficial to most people who have a high fear of public speaking.

_____4. I believe public speaking classes are more beneficial to those who have a slight fear of public speaking.

_____5. I was exposed to books or materials before college that were helpful in addressing the fear of public speaking.

_____6. I have found resources in college or seminary that have been helpful in addressing the fear of public speaking.

_____7. There are adequate resources available in libraries and online to equip those who struggle with a fear of public speaking.

_____8. College classrooms are a safe place to address the fear of public speaking.

_____9. College classrooms are a scary place to address the fear of public speaking.

_____10. Overall, public speaking classes have been helpful in increasing my confidence as a public speaker.

_____11. The fear of public speaking can cause a person to avoid a potential career opportunity.

_____12. The fear of public speaking could affect my future career choices.

_____13. Most people with a fear of public speaking would prefer to keep this fear hidden.

_____14. Most people with a fear of public speaking are willing to do whatever it takes to conquer this fear.

_____15. There are certain careers that I would prefer to avoid due to expectations of public speaking (Ex: Pastor, professor, media broadcaster).

_____16. I believe conquering the fear of public speaking can be taught.

_____17. I believe conquering the fear of public speaking is best addressed through experience.

_____18. People who have overcome the fear of public speaking have done a good job in sharing their experience and providing available resources.

_____19. Public speaking courses would benefit from having more time and resources devoted to the fear of public speaking.

_____20. Public speaking courses would benefit from have more people who have conquered their fear of public speaking give testimony in class.

115

APPENDIX 4

LEVELS OF FEAR IN PUBLIC SPEAKING

Levels of Fear in Public Speaking

■ College Students   ■ Seminary Students

PHONE INTERVIEW

Addressing the Fear of Public Speaking Anxiety

*This following questions will be asked in your requested phone interview. Please take the time to look through these and feel free to abstain from responding to any material that makes you feel uncomfortable.

1) Can you identify a moment in your life when public speaking became a source of anxiety? How long did you struggle with this fear and when did it become most problematic?
2) How helpful were public speaking courses growing up? Was there a course or teacher in particular that was effective in helping you to address this fear?
3) Do you feel as though the fear of public speaking is adequately addressed in college and graduate level courses?
4) Did your fear of public speaking ever affect your thinking in regards to career or God's calling in your life?
5) Was there a particular crossroad or moment in time which caused you to address your fear of public speaking?
6) How have you learned to manage or overcome this fear? Are there books, courses, or workshops that you would recommend?
7) Overall, has facing this fear helped or hindered you reaching your full potential as a public speaker?

APPENDIX 6

"HERE I AM LORD, PLEASE SEND SOMEONE ELSE!"

A Biblical Guide for Addressing the Fear of Public Speaking

By

David F. Rockness

INTRODUCTION: ADDRESSING THE FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

The fear of public speaking is a challenge that must be properly understood if there is to be any hope of addressing it effectively. A contemporary author writes: "Understanding fear changes our lives in extremes ways, but nobody ever teaches us about this basic, primal emotion. I don't recall a single lesson about fear from preschool up to graduate school. More importantly, most of us know very little about how to deal with fear when it stands in our way" (Yogis 2013, p. 1). If you can relate to being affected by fear over something as simple as making an announcement in church or something as significant as pursuing a vocational calling, this booklet is for you. The intention behind this material is to help educate and better equip you to deal with this fear in practical ways and from a biblical perspective.

CHAPTER 1: A PROBLEM EXPOSED

A 12-year-old boy entered his home room on the first day of junior high school prepared to turn in a written summer assignment entitled, "My Summer Vacation." Although he felt confident about the quality of his work, he was thrown by an announcement from his new teacher. Everyone had to stand at the front of the class and read their written assignments to their peers. Presentations would begin on a volunteer basis and then move to random selection. The very thought of giving a speech pushed this young adolescent into panic mode—his heart began to race, negative thoughts consumed his mind, and he seriously considered making a beeline for the door. The longer he waited for his turn, the greater his anxiety became. Finally, the 12-year-old was called upon to present and just hearing his name announced produced an additional surge of adrenaline beyond anything he could properly manage. As he wobbled his way towards the podium, he could feel the eyes of his peers upon him. Although he made it through the reading, he was embarrassed by his trembling hands and quivering voice. A couple of giggling boys reinforced his feelings of shame. Little did he know at the time that his fear of public speaking would grow progressively stronger in high school and later in college. In fact, it would become a problem impacting choices he would make with regard to leadership opportunities, career ambition, and even having a receptive spirit when it came to God's potential "calling" in his life.

IF YOU CAN RELATE TO THIS STORY, YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

The Problem

Studies have shown that a strikingly high proportion of people in our culture view public speaking as their most significant fear (Beebe, 1991). A commonly quoted statistic dating back to the early 1970s was that 41% of Americans placed public speaking at the top of their "fear list" above heights, financial problems, and even death (Wallechinksky, Wallace & Wallace 1977, pp. 469-470). One self-help organizer for stutterers wrote humorously as follows:

> When I first learned that public speaking was the thing people feared most, I was very surprised. I thought this to be true for those of us who stutter, but not for the public at large. I had always figured that the fear of death would top this list for most people. Upon reflection, however, I came up with three advantages that death has over speaking in front of a group of people. First of all, you are only going to die once, whereas, there is no limit to the number of times you can make a fool of yourself before an audience. Second, death is the best way I know to avoid speaking in front of a group. And, last, but not least, after you die, you do not have to walk back to your seat. (Horwitz 2002, p. 13)

A 2001 Gallup poll also reveals that 40% of Americans report public speaking as their most significant fear, ranking it second behind snakes (Brewer 2001). In devoting hours to research into this topic, I have stumbled upon names such as Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain, Robert Frost, Winston Churchill, JFK, Johnny Carson, Oprah Winfrey, Conan O'Brien, Jay Leno, Harrison Ford, Leonardo DiCaprio, Tina Fey, Tom Hanks, Garrison Keillor, John Piper, and Joel Osteen—all of whom have revealed having to deal with a significant fear of public speaking. The late Dale Carnegie, still revered as a public speaking guru, claims to have received thousands of confessions similar to this one:

> When I am called upon to stand and speak, I become so self-conscious, so frightened, that I can't think clearly, can't concentrate, can't remember what I had

121

intended to say. I want to gain self-confidence, poise, and the ability to speak on my feet. I want to get my thoughts together in logical order and I want to be able to speak clearly and convincingly before a business or club group or audience. (Carnegie 2011, p. 1)

A Toastmasters group once asked a hundred men in their class to describe their feelings before making a speech. It is notable that the men questioned were not novices. In fact, many of them had spoken at a variety of occasions for years. A report of their responses reveals the following: "Their feelings ranged from almost petrification to an unfeeling numbness which caused their thoughts to be hazy and jumbled. Only three of the hundred told us that they felt a harmless kind of nervous excitement. This, then, is a major problem in public speaking" (Tack 1973, p. 21). James C. McCroskey, known for his prolific scholarship in the field of communication, reports that 70% of college students can be categorized as having high levels of anxiety about public speaking—30% as "moderately high" and 40% as "very high" (Richmond, Wrench & McCroskey 2013, p. 36). Upon detailed analysis of research data, he concludes "that it is 'normal' to experience a fairly high degree of anxiety about public speaking. Most people do. If you are highly anxious about public speaking, then you are 'normal'" (Richmond, et al., pp. 36-37). Clearly, the fear of public speaking is a problem shared by a significant percentage of people in our culture. *Again, if you can relate to this fear, you are not alone. In fact, you are normal.*

EFFECTS OF THIS PROBLEM WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF MINISTRY

The fear of public speaking is a reality that can affect a potential call as it relates to ministry. Moses was a tremendous leader who was consistently responsive to spiritual promptings in his life. However, when called upon by God to deliver a message to

Pharaoh in Egypt, his initial response was shaky: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" (Exodus 3:11) As the Lord offered assurance to equip him with presence and power, his concern shifted to, "What shall I say?" (3:13) and "suppose they do not believe me or listen to me?" (4:1) Even though the Lord provided tangible reassurance for each objection, the very thought of being God's public spokesperson in a potentially hostile environment sent Moses into a state of petrified anxiety. In fact, his fear of such a speech caused him to exclaim, "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (4:10). Finally, he begged, "O my Lord, please send someone else" (4:13). The apostle Paul also expressed anxiety about his call to public speaking. In writing about his preaching venture in Corinth, he recalled "I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling" (1 Corinthians 2:3). The term used for trembling can also be translated "anxious conscientiousness." Certainly there was a degree of angst that he had to deal with when preaching in hostile environments. For example, he acknowledged as follows the harsh words his critics aimed at his preaching: "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10). Ultimately, if you have ever felt the urge to dodge a speaking assignment or have approached a podium weak-kneed and trembling, you are in good spiritual company.

In light of the above insights and studies, I believe that there is a significant group of men and women with great potential for Christian leadership who are pushing back or struggling with a perceived ministry call upon their lives because of a deep-rooted fear of public speaking. In fact, I can personally attest to this paralyzing battle. I was the junior

123

high student who perceived danger when my name was called to step forward for a speech. For years my biological alarm system would activate sweat glands, racing thoughts, and a severe bout of the shakes just at the thought of giving a sermon or speech. Although "fight" was a behavioral response I learned to use to my advantage on the athletic field, "flight" became my coping mechanism for public speaking as my fear continued to grow in high school and college. This fear led me to avoid leadership positions that might require speaking in public. For example, in high school I refused to run for Student Council because of the campaign speech that was required. I was happy to accept the role of Honor Society President, however, because that only involved a nomination and vote. Unfortunately, my Honor Society position led to a series of impromptu speaking disasters that sparked an internal vow to avoid any similar mishaps in the future. Thus, when a deeply respected college professor suggested pastoral ministry as a potential "calling" for my life, I gave an assortment of excuses to hide the true reality—my fear of public speaking. The excuses, as nobly as they were presented, were my way of hiding the real issues and diverting any trace of the embarrassment and shame connected to my hidden fear. Although at the time I felt as though I was alone with this fear, I have now come to realize that my fear of public speaking was a common struggle shared by a majority of my classmates and peers. As shameful and helpless as it seemed, I was completely normal. *If you have a hidden fear of public speaking, be encouraged to know that you are in the majority. You are normal and there is hope for even the most extreme cases when addressed with proper understanding.*

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1) Complete the PRPSA found in Appendix 2.
2) Would you consider the fear of public speaking to be a problem in your life? If so, in what way?
3) Can you identify with the above scenarios concerning Moses or the apostle Paul? If so, with which aspect of their fear do you relate the most?

GROUP QUESTIONS

1) What spoke to you the most in this first chapter? Did you find yourself more encouraged or discouraged?
2) What was your PRPSA score? Do you feel your score is accurate?
3) For those who scored high, do you feel as though you are in the majority or do you feel more alone in this fear? Explain why.
4) Did you feel as though the biblical material was applicable? Is so, in what way?

CHAPTER 2: FEAR IS HEALTHY WHEN PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD

Jon is a veteran youth pastor who is known as an engaging speaker with young people and a leader among his ministry colleagues. It came to my attention that he once had a tremendous fear of public speaking, so I was grateful to be able to interview him about his former struggle. Jon recalls a time when fear was a problem that deeply affected aspects of his ministry related to public speaking. The trouble started during his freshman year of high school. Motivated by a desire to be class clown, he decided to dress in character for an oral report in English class. In the middle of his presentation, he felt himself becoming uncharacteristically nervous—breaking out into a sudden clammy sweat and struggling to concentrate on the performance at hand. Before he knew it, he was lying dazed and confused on the floor, having fainted in front of his peers. This incident led to a seemingly uncontrollable pattern. Every time he had to face a new public speaking situation, Jon would be gripped by debilitating fear. He began to loathe first time events and fainted on several occasions—his first Scripture reading in church, his first sermon preached, and his first time officiating a wedding (to name just a few). He remembers feeling horrible and helpless. New situations would work him into such a frenzy that his fear of fainting became a self-fulfilling prophecy. This was a problem beyond his understanding and he began to feel there must be something terribly wrong with him.

Jon believes he hit a crossroad when he was asked for the first time to officiate at a funeral. This is where he adamantly felt that the pattern needed to stop. Another fainting episode would, he believed, ruin any chance of a meaningful service. He recalls

126

visiting a doctor and being told that he possessed low blood pressure. However, while this condition was believed to have contributed to his fainting spells, the doctor felt that the main culprit was his cognitive thinking pattern. In other words it was more of a head issue than a health issue. With the funeral service at hand, Jon remembers crying out to God, "Do this for me because I can't do it on my own." Fortunately he made it through the funeral service standing and has not had a fainting episode since. Although he does not attribute being cured of public speaking anxiety to this experience, he does believe it was his first step towards understanding his problem physically, cognitively, and spiritually. When later I processed the interview in its entirety, I was struck by the way Jon can now view fear as a healthy aspect of his spiritual journey and growth.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FEAR COGNITIVELY

As the introduction to a speech takes place, the person thrust into the spotlight is thrown into a potentially fear-inducing situation. All eyes are on the speaker who is processing his or her surroundings. Perceptions formed both consciously and subconsciously begin sending messages to the brain. Disturbing thoughts may begin to form: How will they receive me? Will they find me interesting? Will I be able to connect? What if they don't like me? What if I forget what to say? If I say something stupid, will they laugh or think less of me? Some of the greatest fears reported by those who experience "stage fright" begin with thoughts of being judged, of forgetting, of embarrassment and failure, and with emotional memories of a bad past experience (Naistadt 2004, p. 24). Negative thinking patterns can be based on reality—an aspiring comedian should expect a certain level of hostility, depending on the audience, as can a preacher, politician, or substitute teacher. However, debilitating thought patterns can also

be based on false pretexts and baseless assumptions. Either way, our bodies are hard-wired to react to fear-inducing objects and situations, real or imagined (Richmond, et al., 2013, p. 32). Therefore, just anticipating or thinking about giving a speech can trigger a biological fear response. *Can you relate?*

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FEAR BIOLOGICALLY

Amazingly, a frightened student giving a speech in front of a class full of peers can display the same fear symptoms as a person confronting a wild animal in the jungle. When the brain receives a sensory message of threat, whether real or perceived, the body's alarm system begins to activate. Adrenaline is suddenly pumped into the blood system, triggering dramatic increases in respiration, heart rate, and levels of perspiration on the surface of the skin. Why? This is so the body can be mobilized to deal with the perceived threat. Oxygen-rich blood is quickly transported to large muscle groups such as the arms and legs. This is how a person can receive a surge of energy, explosive enough to jump over a ten foot puddle or even miraculously lift a car (Grice & Skinner 2010, p. 37). Furthermore, the brain is told to stop other unnecessary actions such as salivating, so the body can focus on the perceived hazard. While superhuman strength might be a helpful response when confronted by a critter in the wild, the dry mouth that can accompany this strength is not the greatest asset for a speech! (Richmond, et al., 2013, p. 33) The sudden activation of the body's alarm system that is specific to public speaking may cause manifestations such as trembling arms, hands, and legs, shortness of breath, difficulty swallowing, tense muscles, and temporary memory loss. Excessive activation is when "anticipation of a performance continues to a point beyond an individual's ability to control it." In extreme cases of excessive activation, a person may experience

128

embarrassing symptoms such as the regurgitation of meals, fainting, urinating, and in rare cases, a heart attack (p. 92). For the most part, the physical symptoms connected to the fear of public speaking are normal and healthy. *Your body is doing what it is supposed to do when it senses an emergency situation.* In extreme cases, such as Youth Pastor Jon's fainting spells, or a series of panic attacks, you should see a physician equipped to diagnose and treat any potential health concern.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FEAR AS IT RELATES TO PRACTICAL MANAGEMENT

A basic understanding of how your mind and body relate to fear can lead to practical management of your fear. I like to compare public speaking anxiety to the butterflies an athlete often experiences before a game or during a pressurized moment of competition. It is normal even for a team's star player to become overwhelmed with adrenaline or nerves. What often separates a veteran or mature player from a rookie is the ability to manage anxiety or even channel heightened energy to their advantage. Dale Carnegie affirms this same insight from a different angle. He states, "Why be a victim of butterflies? Surely, you realize that this condition can be remedied, that training and practice will wear away your audience fright and give you self-confidence" (Carnegie 1962, p. 16). In fact, like a coach encouraging an athlete, he offers insight into how performance anxiety is normal in the maturing process and eventually becomes manageable through practice and experience:

> If stage fright gets out of hand and seriously curtails your effectiveness by causing mental blocks, lack of fluency, uncontrollable tics, and excessive muscular spasms, you should not despair. These symptoms are not unusual in beginners. If you make the effort, you will find the degree of stage fright soon reduced to the point where it will prove a help and not a hindrance. (p. 34)

129

As I researched the fear of public speaking from a wide variety of perspectives, I found common themes in the advice aimed at managing or minimizing performance anxiety. I have formulated some of these themes into a list that you might find helpful. However, I would like to clarify that this list is not exhaustive, nor is it a simple foolproof formula for success in overcoming your fear. Below are a few practical insights for managing destructive thinking patterns and biological responses:

1) **Be prepared.** Own your material. Some experts recommend an hour or two of preparation for every minute of speaking. Studies show that mastering the subject at hand can reduce stage fright by up to 75% (Lucas 2009, p. 10).

2) **Think positively.** Replace thoughts such as "Oh boy, I wish I didn't have to give this speech" with "I may be nervous, but what a great opportunity to share this idea!"

3) **Make peace with your fear.** Acceptance is a key step to maturity. Learning to "ride the wave" may be an unavoidable aspect of your journey.

4) **Shift focus from self to audience.** Think less about what they may think of you and more about what you may have to offer them. Are they there to help you or are you there to help them?

5) **Visualize success.** Keep your goal before you, and like an Olympic athlete, visualize positive execution of your goal in advance.

6) **Use stories and "props" strategically.** An opening story may help to "break the ice" or work through the initial stage of adrenaline. Use of resources such as PowerPoint, notecards, or handouts may help to ground your material if you struggle with racing thoughts.

7) **Seek out experience.** Take a workshop. Join a group like Toastmasters. Sign up to make an announcement or read scripture in church. Speak out at a committee meeting. Accept that the road might be bumpy.

8) **Take a deep breath before you start your speech.** Allow your heart to race. Use this moment to gather yourself before you "step to the plate."

9) **Clench your muscles.** If you are experiencing "the shakes," clench affected muscle groups and relax. You may even want to rotate your neck or shake your arms.

10) **Bring a water bottle.** Be equipped for "dry mouth." Clench your teeth a little if find yourself without any liquids on hand.

11) **See a doctor or therapist.** If some of your biological manifestations seem extreme, get a check-up. They can either affirm you are normal and healthy or help get to the root of the problem.

12) **Be prayerful.** This should probably be the first and last point. Do not underestimate the power of prayer and meditation in addressing your fear of public speaking. And remember, the prayer "I can do all things though Christ Jesus who strengthens me" in context may give you the strength to conquer the fear of public speaking <u>or</u> the strength to give a speech despite your fear of public speaking. (Learning to be content in all circumstances is a sign of spiritual maturity.)

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FEAR IN A BIBLICAL SENSE

Fear is a healthy emotion when its source is holy and the response leads to proper conduct. Scripture firmly establishes the Lord as the appropriate source of all fear, stating, "The Lord your God you shall follow, him alone you shall fear" (Deuteronomy 13:4). Biblical wisdom affirms "the fear of the Lord" as "the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7) and a "fountain of life" (14:27). Not only does Scripture establish the Lord as the appropriate source of all fear, but it records the desire for God's people to respond to fear with proper conduct. When the question is raised, "What does the Lord require of you [Israel]?" the appropriate response is this: "Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his decrees" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). The proper relation to fear is further clarified in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. Jesus brings godly perspective to fear by stressing, "Do not fear

131

those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). The apostle Paul emphasizes that proper fear towards God brings holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1) and that salvation should be worked out "with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). And the apostle John not only defines God as love (1 John 4:8), but offers God's love as the solution for dealing with an unhealthy sense of fear. He states, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (18). If God is the source of appropriate fear and desires a proper response to this emotion, how do we account for unhealthy fear? Where does it come from? How should we respond to it?

Unhealthy fear entered this world with the "Fall" of humankind, is portrayed biblically in a negative way, and must be met with godly perspective. Fear can be a result of the sin and rebellion against God that leads to avoidance. When Adam and Eve first sinned, they were so terrified that they hid from God in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8-10). Fear can be a consequence of failing to trust in God. When King Saul lost all spiritual focus and turned his back on the Lord at the sight of the Philistine army, "he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly" (1 Samuel 28:5). Fear can be a haunting emotion when a person's conscience is troubled or ignored. When Pontius Pilate was considering what to do with Jesus, he is described as being "more afraid than ever" with regard to the horrific demands made by the crowd (John 19:8). "Fear not!" is a common exhortation given by God to His people as He addresses our tendency to become rattled or consumed by people and circumstances. David, like King Saul, became rattled in the midst of the conflict with the mighty Philistines. However, he brought his fear before the Lord and exclaimed with praise, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I

praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can flesh do to me?" (Psalm 56:3-4). Ultimately, as the author of Hebrews reminds us, the Lord promises all believers His constant presence in a way that should equip us to conclude, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" (13:5-6).

Although you may feel the fear of public speaking is an overwhelming challenge, the problematic aspects of this emotion can lead towards a greater reliance on God and a strengthening of personal faith. John Stott emphasizes human weakness is a key ingredient for humility and dependence on God. He cites several examples from the writings of the apostle Paul, including Paul's overwhelming struggle with a thorn in the flesh. As Stott analyzes his way through Paul's weaknesses and difficulties, he finally concludes: "In these cases human weakness was deliberately permitted to continue, in order to be the medium through which divine power could operate and the arena in which it could be displayed" (Stott 1982, p. 331). Perhaps your prayer is that God will completely remove your fear of public speaking. Wouldn't that seem great? And perhaps He will! However, a huge step of faith may involve moving forward without God taking away this fear. Your prayer may borrow from Philippians 4:13 and become instead, "I accept my inability to overcome this debilitating fear, yet I can do all things through him (Christ Jesus) who strengthens me." And as you struggle to understand why God would allow weak knees and a trembling voice, through prayer and further reliance on God's strength, you can grow to accept the mindset embraced by Paul: "'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Ultimately, fear is healthy when it drops you to your knees and points you towards God's

grace to utilize His power through your weakness.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1) In what ways would you consider fear to be healthy?
2) What aspect of this emotion do you find most destructive or challenging?
3) Do any of the above scripture verses resonate with you? If so, what might God be saying to you through that particular verse?

GROUP QUESTIONS

1) What type of thoughts do you experience in public speaking situations?
2) On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the health of your fear? Explain.
3) How have you addressed public speaking fear in the past? Did you find any of the practical insights helpful or worthy of pursuit?

CHAPTER 3: FEAR IS VALUABLE WHEN PROPERLY PLACED

Kyle is the Head of Staff at a relatively large church and a leader in his community. As a college student at a Christian liberal arts school of more than two thousand students, he was twice president of his class. What most people did not know at the time was that he was terribly afraid of public speaking. He once had to lead a class chapel and can recall "white knuckling" it—sweating, trembling, losing his train of thought and wondering if he should continue in the moment. This incident drove him away from pursuing church ministry. He became a teacher and found the interactive aspect of teaching made public speaking easier. Although he learned to manage his fear within the context of public education, he felt deep within that he not he was not following God's will. Eventually this senior pastor made the shift to church ministry by becoming a youth pastor and over time was able to manage his fear connected to public speaking.

Kyle identifies spiritual maturity and coming to terms with God's calling as major factors that have helped him address his fear of public speaking. He feels college and seminary had very little impact on teaching him to face this fear, acknowledging that at that stage in his life he would simply exercise the discipline of getting up front when required. He recalls taking a public speaking seminar as a youth pastor and finding the experience helpful in organizing his thoughts to reduce anxiety. However, the "ah-ha" moment came as a senior pastor in what he describes as an epiphany. The thought suddenly struck him that his public speaking anxiety was rooted in pride—he was not willing to be embarrassed and wanted people to think well of him. Over time, by letting

go of his pride and progressively submitting his image issues to the Lord, Kyle believes

he overcame 90% of his fear. In fact, this humble spirit of surrender has produced a new

sense of joy in his preaching. As Kyle has embraced God's calling and matured in his

faith, his fear of the Lord has begun to outweigh his fear of what others may think of him.

Have you ever wrestled with a sense of God's calling in your life? If so, in what ways has

fear been allowed to dictate or influence your response to spiritual promptings?

THE VALUE OF FEAR

Fear is valuable when its connection to God outweighs any desire to find

acceptance in the eyes of people. Most who struggle with a fear of public speaking have a

deep concern about what an audience might think or how a congregation will respond.

Will they relate to my stories? Will they like my personality? What if my message

offends, or worse, is ignored? The danger of this type of fear is the potential it has to

disrupt a ministry calling. In fact, I conducted a survey with 48 seminarians of whom 13

identified themselves as having a fear of public speaking.[1] Of the 20 statements made in

the survey, those with this fear responded most strongly to this statement: "The fear of

public speaking can cause a person to avoid a potential career opportunity." This

response highlights the sobering reality that a potential ministry calling can be missed

because of displaced fear. Although the human tendency is to place fear before people

and circumstances, Scripture repeatedly calls upon believers to place their fear in the

Lord (Deuteronomy 10:12; Joshua 24:14; Ecclesiastes12:13; Isaiah 8:13). As the apostle

Paul grew in his faith, he declared, "Am I now seeking human approval, or God's

approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be

---

[1] The survey is attached in Appendix 3.

a servant of Christ" (Galatians 10:1). *Take a moment to consider your own life…when it comes to public speaking, where do you place your fear? Are you more concerned about pleasing God or being accepted by hearers of your speech?* I believe "the fear of the Lord" strengthens with spiritual maturity and can become a valuable factor in how a person responds to the "callings" of God.

FEAR IN RELATION TO GOD'S "CALLINGS"

Fear can affect the way a person responds to the "callings" of God. First, a biblical distinction must be made between a "primary" and "secondary" calling. A primary calling is divine and directly relates to our salvation. The apostle Paul states "Lead a life worthy of God, who *calls* you into his own kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12) and "take hold of the eternal life, to which you were *called* and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12). All believers have been called into a relationship with God through Christ and to eternal life in heaven. A secondary calling is also from God and applies to ministry or service. Scripture not only recognizes a believer's deliverance from sin, but celebrates how our release enables us to righteously serve God with courage (Luke 1:74-75). Os Guinness offers insight into how these two aspects work together:

> We can therefore properly say as a matter of secondary calling that we are called to homemaking or to the practice of law or to art history. But those and other things are always the secondary, never the primary calling. They are "callings" rather than the "calling." They are our personal answer to God's address, our response to God's summons. Secondary callings matter, but only because primary calling matters most (Guinness 2003, p. 31).

The apostle Paul responded to God's call upon his life through a dramatic experience on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9). This primary calling of salvation led to a life of service

137

as an apostle (secondary calling) called to preach the Gospel message to a Gentile audience (Romans 1:1, 5-7). Interestingly, a ministry calling does not necessarily match a person's professional vocation. Yes, Billy Graham has devoted his life to being a full-time evangelist. And yes, Kyle, the senior pastor mentioned above, left his job as a teacher to respond to the calling of full-time church ministry. However, the apostle Paul did not receive a salary as a full-time pastor or missionary. Rather, he earned a living from tent-making (Acts 18:1-3). Was he making tents because he felt this to be a spiritual gift? Did he find something special in performing this specific task? As the apostle Paul was driven by God's primary calling (salvation) to respond to secondary callings (ministry of preaching, church planting, etc.), he showed no inclination to elevate his status as tent-maker to anything other than an ordinary profession to help pay the bills. Os Guinness provides additional insight in this regard:

> Many Christians make the mistake of elevating a special calling or of talking as if everyone needed a special call for every task. ("Were you called to this job?") Some use the word *calling* piously regarding all their decisions, thinking it is the word to use, when in fact they have not had any special call. To the surprise of both groups, there is not a single instance in the New Testament of God's special call to anyone into a paid occupation or into the role of a religious professional. Others feel that without a special call, they have had no call at all. So they wait around for guidance and become passive, excusing themselves by saying they have had "no call." But all they are doing is confusing the two types of call and burying their real talent in the napkin in the ground. (p. 49)

Ultimately, perceived ministry callings, whether they are in or outside a full-time profession, may include tasks or duties that produce fear within the person who is called.

FEAR PROPERLY PLACED

The real challenge takes place when a perceived ministry calling pulls a person outside his or her comfort zone. *Do you respond with fearful reverence to the promptings*

138

of God's Spirit or do you find an excuse to mask concern driven by displaced fear? The

prophet Jonah went to great lengths to avoid his calling to preach God's message to the

crowds in Nineveh. Moses was not exactly thrilled by God's call upon his life to deliver a

message to the Pharaoh of Egypt. Their excuses, no matter how cleverly packaged, were

prideful and self-centered. Many in our culture today hide behind Myer-Briggs testing

and even spiritual gifts courses offered by Christian organizations. It is not that these

instruments are bad, but it has become quite common to hear church members rebuff an

uncomfortable ministry opportunity by saying, "Sorry, that simply is not one of my

spiritual gifts." Sound familiar? William Willimon gives this insight with regard to the

value of the excuses used by Moses to resist or avoid God's ministry calling:

> Moses protests. He is not good at public speaking. He has baggage. Yet Moses
> finds what succeeding generations found. Once comes the call to service, it is
> futile to wrestle with God. Once God has got in God's mind that someone is a
> leader, one might as well relent with deferential, 'Here am I, send me." (Willimon
> 2000, p. 16)

It is not unusual for the Lord to call a believer outside his or her comfort zone. In fact, He

often calls those who seem the least likely to accomplish a ministry role or task—the

lowly shepherd, the barren spouse, the weaker twin, the foreigner with a checkered past,

the uneducated fisherman, the despised tax collector, and the person with a speech

impediment or a barrier that may seem impossible to overcome. *If you find yourself*

avoiding or resisting a potential calling in your life because of the fear of public

speaking, take to heart this perspective from the Apostle Paul:

> Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by
> human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But
> God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is
> weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the

world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

By placing fear in the Lord and humbly responding in trust to His callings, you can accomplish His purposes for His glory. Sure, you may feel as though you are making a fool of yourself at times, yet fear properly placed will help you grow spiritually and rely on His power and strength. Fear is dangerous when a person is driven by people-pleasing, self-preservation, or pride. However, fear is tremendously valuable if it causes you to surrender your will to His purpose and desires. As John Calvin once stated, "We are not our own: let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh" (Kerr 1989, p. 93). Therefore, the fear of public speaking finds great value if it is secondary to the fear of the Lord, pushing you outside your comfort zone in a way that allows you to humbly trust in God's ministry plan for your future.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1) What areas of pride do you struggle with the most? If you struggle with a fear of public speaking, would you in any way link this fear to pride?
2) How strongly does your primary calling drive the secondary callings in your life?
3) Has fear ever driven a wedge between you and God or affected your faith in a negative way? If so, how?
4) Do you believe that being taken out of your comfort zone is healthy or harmful for ministry? How so?

GROUP QUESTIONS

1) Can any of you relate with pastor Kyle's story? If so, which aspect resonates with you the most?
2) Have any of you tried to avoid a potential ministry calling or task? If so, how far have you gone to avoid discomfort? What have been some of your "go to" excuses?
3) Do you agree that the fear of public speaking can be considered valuable to a person's faith? If so, in what way?

140

CHAPTER 4: FEAR IS MADE IRRELEVANT BY THE POWER OF THE MESSAGE

Doug is a retired pastor who has served as the Head of Staff in a relatively large church and continues to serve in leadership positions within his denomination. He recalls his first public speaking experience as part of a junior high campaign for class president. As he addressed the student body and worked his way through a speech with notecard in hand, he became too nervous to flip over the card. After standing in silence for an awkward length of time, he finally left the stage without finishing his speech. A similar incident occurred in his freshman year in high school. He was in the homeroom office reading a speech over the intercom when he became absolutely stymied—hands shaking, thoughts racing, and frozen in a way that made him fearful to move. The two incidents combined shook his confidence in ever speaking publically again. However, in his sophomore year of high school he was asked to lead the singing. That is, when his school choir performed, he was the student who had to announce the next songs in the program. He believes this experience helped him become more relaxed on the public stage and although the fear still existed, he was better able to manage his anxiety.

Doug tells the story of a nerve-racking experience that took place in seminary. Although by this stage in life the outward manifestations of his public speaking fear had become less noticeable, he still struggled to feel comfortable in front of a group. He recalls giving a sermon about the power of the Holy Spirit in a preaching class. He tells of being nervous, not traumatically so, but enough to look stiff and sound monotone as he worked his way through the biblical material. Immediately after his sermon, the professor

stepped up before the class and in an exaggeratedly dull voice began chanting, "Isn't this exciting? You too can have the power of the Holy Spirit." This memory has stuck with Doug over the years in a very vivid way and he still cringes a bit as he tells it. Fortunately, he can now see humor in this incident and does not look back on it with any harsh feelings or deep wounds.

Doug believes that he learned to manage his fear of public speaking simply by embracing his desire to be faithful. He does not consider himself a great preacher, but has always committed himself to being true to the text—"getting the information emphasized over somehow." Somewhere along the way in his ministry he learned to take pressure off himself by not trying to hit a homerun weekly from the pulpit. He believes he drew this mentality from those pastors in his life who modeled a healthy sense of proportion and who conveyed no need to impress. Also, he expresses gratitude for his strength of calling. When called upon to give a talk or lead a group, he has simply found himself doing what he has to do. One aspect that stood out strongly throughout the interview with Doug was his humility in seeing that any fear of public speaking is irrelevant in light of what God can do through the power of His inspired Word. It is more about the message than the messenger. *Do you believe that the gospel message has the power to break through even the weakest of humans in the most challenging of situations?*

THE REALITY OF HUMAN INADEQUACIES ALONG WITH TANGIBLE REASONS FOR FEAR

There are many factors, some unhealthy and others legitimate, that can feed a person's fear of public speaking. My introduction to each chapter in this booklet has offered personal insight into those human frailties and unfortunate experiences that can

contribute to such a problem. Even one of the most influential preachers of all time, the apostle Paul, was humbly aware of his own limitations as a public speaker. His letters emphasize personal weaknesses such as physical infirmities (2 Corinthians 12:7), untrained speech (11:6), and a lack of eloquent persuasiveness in his approach (1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:1). A group of false teachers mocked him with these words: "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10). There were also groups who criticized his preaching skills and content, regarding him as a "babbler," and "scoffing" at the core of his message (Acts 17:18, 32). In addition to his shortcomings and the criticisms made of him, Paul had every reason to fear a backlash connected to his preaching ministry. He knew how it felt to be beaten and imprisoned, (Acts 16:19-24), chased by angry mobs (17:5-10), and physically forced to leave a town or city (13-15), mostly because audiences were offended or infuriated by his public proclamation of Jesus. Like Paul, every human being has vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Some of the most effective communicators are slight of build and slow in speech. Even the most gifted and dynamic orators have their critics. In fact, it must be stressed that all who publically proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ should expect considerable levels of backlash even in the most "tolerant" areas of the world. However, as much as any inadequacy or danger may discourage a person from addressing the fear of public speaking, the message of the Gospel has the power to effectively shine through even the weakest of earthly vessels.

THE IRRELEVANCY OF FEAR IN LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL

The very nature of the Gospel message makes any fear entertained by the messenger irrelevant. When God is behind the message, human beings simply become

143

containers or vehicles to deliver His powerful Word. A person like Moses might say, "I can't do this! I'm inept in speech; the circumstances are beyond my ability to deliver. Please send someone else!" Yet God consistently responds by letting the messenger know "I give you this message. It is not about you!" Scott Wilson, Professor of Homiletics, contributes to this line of thinking by emphasizing what he feels should be the standpoint of any committed pastor: "For the preacher, giving oneself to God in preaching means dying to self to live for God" (Childers and Schmit 2008, p. 48). Such a perspective shifts feelings of fear and inadequacy (How does the audience view my performance?) to those of intimacy and love (How can I better proclaim God's love for these people?). Wilson emphasizes a healthy perspective on ways the messenger relates to the message by stating:

> Each of us humans has a misguided sense of being the center of the universe; the performance of a sermon reinforces this illusion of being at the center, and it is this illusion also that necessarily dies. In acknowledging that the role of herald is a role in service of One greater, the power of the Word is acknowledged. The Word does not die at the end of a sermon (though words as acoustic images die); the preacher's role dies as the deliverer of that Word. (p. 48)

One caution about emphasizing the Word and dying to self has to do with the sense of self-awareness that may subtly shine through as a person begins to gain confidence as a communicator of Gospel truth. Wayne McDill, in a book devoted to preaching, shares, "You have heard prayers such as, 'Lord, let no one see this preacher today, but let everyone see Jesus.' As I have complimented the sermons of young preachers, I have often been told, 'It wasn't me; it was the Lord.' My uneasiness with that view has occasionally had me say, 'Well, it wasn't *that* good'" (McDill 1999, p. 26). He later distinguishes between inherent self-centeredness and a sermon led by the Holy Spirit by

144

downplaying first-person prayers such as, "Lord, hide me behind the cross" or "Lord, just use Your servant." A more appropriate prayer, he suggests, is one that focuses on the recipients of a message and asks God to minister His word to meet their needs (p. 178). Thus, when the focus is truly the message, the messenger pushes the spotlight away from self (fear and/or self-confidence) and embraces the capacity of the inspired content to deliver.

The apostle Paul provides insightful images showing how all believers should view their role in sharing the Gospel message. One is a picture of humility. Paul is honest in describing himself as a weak messenger who sometimes approaches an audience with fear and trembling. As he expresses his personal limitations and downplays his own wisdom, he emphasizes power in the ministry of the Holy Spirit to deliver God's Word so that the recipients' faith "might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). A second picture Paul provides is that of servanthood. This he shares within the context of people comparing his preaching style with that of the more eloquent Apollos. Paul downplays the roles of both preachers and uses agricultural language when stating emphatically, "What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (3:5-7). A third picture also carries the connotations of humility and servanthood, this time through comparison with a clay jar (2 Corinthians 4:1-12). This is perhaps Paul's most effective image in capturing how the fear of public speaking becomes irrelevant in light of the Gospel message. Imagine a believer who is terrified by the thought of reading Scripture, teaching a lesson, or presenting a sermon.

145

The example of Doug giving his seminary sermon about the Holy Spirit may come to mind. *Or perhaps the image that first comes to mind is you!* A clay jar carries with it a suggestion of the human frailties and worldly challenges faced by all human beings. Feelings of insecurity, personal limitation, and the sting of criticism may crack or chip away at the jar. However, this image also includes the concept of a valuable treasure contained within the brittle shells of all believers—the light of the Gospel that shines through the cracks and broken shards to demonstrate the nature of God's message. Amidst human inadequacies and the legitimate fears attached to public speaking, a person faithful to the word of God can find solace from this perspective: "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." Ultimately, although the fear of public speaking can be discouraging or disheartening, *remember that it is not about you.* If you are a faithful servant, despite weakness and trembling, your fear becomes irrelevant as the power the Gospel message shines through.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1) What factors cause you to become nervous in front of a group or congregation?
2) Have you ever witnessed the powerful effect of the Gospel message despite the shaky delivery of a preacher?

GROUP QUESTIONS

1) Can you identify a pastor or preacher in your life who has modeled humility and servanthood in their preaching? How would you describe their preaching style?
2) Which of the three images communicated by Paul resonates with you the most? In what way?
3) Most of this chapter is related to preaching. Do you feel any of the insights are applicable to other forms of public speaking? If so, how?

CHAPTER 5: FEAR CAN CO-EXIST WITH BOLDNESS WHEN GOD IS AT WORK

Jackson is a senior pastor and former leader of a team of foreign missionaries. He has weekly pulpit duty and has been called upon regularly within his denomination to preach, teach, and train leaders in a variety of settings and formats. Although most would view him as a competent and confident public speaker, he still considers himself to have an active fear of public speaking. He describes himself as having been shy as a kid and not wanting to be in the public eye at all. He does not recall any real social awkwardness among his peers as an elementary student. However, as he grew older he became very conscious how difficult it was to express himself in the classroom and in group discussions. He remembers vividly the day he failed a physics test in junior high school. The teacher wanted to help, and called him forward in front of the class to give him a chance to redeem himself. Jackson recalls, "It was a disaster! I was exposed and flunked the oral exam!" He describes this experience as an event that he still wrestles with to this day. Although he has learned to manage his fear of public speaking somewhat, he wanted to make it clear that he has yet to overcome this fear.

As Jackson grew into adulthood, the fear of public speaking continued to linger. He describes this as "not just fear, but trepidation, unreasonable, intensified fear that simply exists." When he first felt a calling to foreign missions, he knew that it would inevitably include public speaking, so he began to consider the possibility of being a pilot instead. Eventually he succumbed to the possibility of ministry by entering seminary, and, as he describes it, "bit the bullet, finding preaching courses to be an awful experience." When pressed about whether or not he found any part of his preaching

147

courses to be helpful, he recalled a preaching clinic in seminary that provided him with a degree of hope. He discovered through watching videotapes of himself preaching that his inward angst was not fully evident to the observer. In fact, he was surprised to see that he looked fairly confident on tape. Thus, Jackson began to focus on refining his appearance in the belief that he would be able to mask the inner fear that he continued to harbor.

Almost twenty years into his ministry, Jackson took an online course in the hope of finally conquering the fear of public speaking. This course exposed him to theophostic healing therapy, which, in his words, is a ministry approach "designed to shine a light on hurt memories of the past." As he worked through the online learning program, he was instructed to take himself to the memory place where he was hurt and visualize Jesus being there for him. He did his best to follow all the instructions and even took an oral exam. Unfortunately, he does not feel this course brought full healing and wonders if it may have helped more if he had experienced it with a live instructor.

Ultimately, Jackson believes that communication is central to Christian leadership and is frustrated with himself for continuing to avoid certain aspects of public speaking. Although he affirms that he has become a strong preacher, he attributes this to a firm grasp of biblical material and being able to confidently own it through proper preparation. At the same time, he feels frustrated and even handicapped to this day by his inability to speak out at denominational meetings. He shares that not once in almost three decades as an ordained pastor has he spoken on the floor in such a setting. He believes there are issues where he could provide valuable input, but fear has kept him from joining the discussion. In general, Jackson agrees that he has been faithful in responding to God's calling in his life and has found that God is always faithful to provide. The one lingering

148

frustration, however, is that he still lives with the tension of this fear. He desperately wants it to go away. This inspires me to ask the question—is Jackson's ongoing struggle an issue of faith, trust, or spiritual maturity? I personally do not believe it is. *If you can relate to Jackson, my encouragement is that the fear of public speaking calls for boldness. And from a biblical standpoint, boldness in ministry does not necessarily mean that all fear or weakness will go away.*

BOLDNESS IS A QUALITY CALLED FOR WHEN GOD IS AT WORK

Scripture does not promise that ministry will be comfortable or easy. In fact, Jesus is honest with his followers that a commitment to Him will bring additional challenges (Matthew 10:16-23). For some people in this world, sharing the Gospel message can result in imprisonment or death. For others, the fear of public speaking may seem as terrifying as imprisonment or death. Your current prayer might be for the boldness to speak in front of a large audience, a new setting, a potentially hostile environment, or simply to read a paragraph of Scripture within the safety of your home church. *Whatever the present challenge may be, the charge is to be bold as you step forward in faith.*

Great biblical leaders have been challenged through the years to trust God as He stretches them beyond their comfort zones and charges them to be bold as they step forward in faith. Although the prospect of a land filled with giants must have been an intimidating one for Joshua, the Lord commissioned him three times to be strong and courageous, promising His trustworthy presence along the way (Joshua 1:1-9). As the disciples expressed concern about an earthly ministry without the bodily presence of their Master, Jesus acknowledged the challenges they would face, yet assured them, "But take courage; I have conquered the world" (John 16:33). And when the apostle Paul spoke

boldly while on trial before the religious leaders, the Lord spoke to him that very evening and declared, "Keep your courage! For just as you testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness in Rome" (Acts 23:11). Ministry can be scary! However, when the Lord is at work, all believers can go forward with boldness, knowing that God will be present every step of the way.

BOLDNESS MAY NOT ALWAYS FEEL SO BOLD

Addressing the fear of public speaking may seem less noble than conquering some of the more "heroic" challenges in life. Who brags about barely pulling off an announcement in church or white-knuckling it through a youth Sunday school lesson? Yet these seemingly simple tasks require an extra dose of courage for even the strongest of people. Betty Horwitz, a licensed speech pathologist and communications professor, puts it in this perspective:

> For example, a brave firefighter who feared public speaking more than going into a burning building said, "I never knew the speech bone was connected to the urinary tract." Another courageous emergency manager who avoided oral presentations claimed that the terror of public speaking was second only to his missions as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam. A foreign news correspondent confessed that he would rather dodge bullets in civil wars then speak in front of a live audience. Like millions of persons, these people, heroic in the face of external danger, cower in front of audiences. (Horwitz 2002, p. 9)

While fear is generally viewed as acceptable for those who enter burning buildings and dodge bullets, the same emotion can be interpreted as a sign of weakness in those who may be equally terrified by the thought of giving a speech. And the same person who feels heroic while charging into a blaze with surging adrenaline and racing thoughts may experience tremendous shame finding themselves similarly charged up on their way to a

150

podium. *Regardless of how you may feel while addressing the fear of public speaking, you demonstrate boldness when you step forward to meet such a challenge.*

BOLDNESS AND FEAR ARE OFTEN THRUST INTO THE SAME ARENA

Many people who have learned to manage their fear of public speaking were initially thrown into situations beyond their own choosing. Lilly is an accomplished author who grew up with a crippling fear of public speaking. Some of this she attributes to shyness ingrained in her temperament, yet she recalls that her reticence as a youth was most challenged when she was forced to speak publically in classroom settings. Because of this fear, she avoided at all costs high school and college classes that involved public presentations. In fact, she admits that as an undergrad student this fear governed her major. Rather than following her heart with an advanced degree in literature, she applied her major to elementary education. This is not a negative reflection of this level of teaching, but simply indicates that she knew deep down she was choosing this route to avoid any potential situation that might involve speaking in front of adults. Interestingly, she reveals that her fear of public speaking and the avoidance patterns that accompanied this fear may have turned her to writing. Lilly can point specifically to a moment in time when she was forced to deal directly with this fear. As a relatively young wife and mother, she hosted a summer session of Bible study for teenage girls in her home. The class was led by a close friend who had the ability to engage with adolescents in a dynamic way. On the final evening of the session, her friend announced to the group that she would no longer be able to lead. However, the group was reassured that they would still be able to meet because Lilly, the host, would certainly be able to take over the leadership. Describing this as a blind-sided announcement, Lilly recalls feeling a dark

151

cloud coming over her and hearing an internal voice say, "I can't, but it's too late. This has already been announced." Thrust into a situation she would not have chosen, she was forced to address her crippling fear by committing to lead this Bible study for teenage girls. Initially, this was her pattern in learning to face this fear—being incrementally forced out of her comfort zone to meet undesirable expectations.

To this day Lilly feels as though she has been forced into every single speaking situation and that competence, owning subject material, and being prepared, have led to confidence. However, she believes firmly that without a sense of God's plan and obedience, she would never have "gone there." And she firmly states, "This is all part of the walk that God has placed before me and the Holy Spirit convicting and equipping is the key part of my story."

I share Lilly's story because I believe it is common for those who have learned to boldly face public speaking fear. "Fight" or "flight" are the typical responses to fear and in the area of public speaking, most resort to flight. However, as I have researched this fear, testimony after testimony has told of the unexpected assignment or unavoidable task that initially led to a person finally addressing their fear of public speaking. In fact, Lilly's story is my story as well. My unexpected assignment involved summer preaching twice a week to an amphitheater of 250 junior high students. This was not by my design or choice! It was a summer of fear and a summer that demanded boldness. Not only did I survive, but over time I learned to embrace and enjoy God's calling on my life to teach and preach the Gospel message.

THE FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING MAY NEVER COMPLETELY GO AWAY

Boldness and fear can co-exist when God is at work. Some may argue with this statement by asking, "Why in the world would God allow for the lingering fear of public speaking? Would not such weakness have a negative effect upon productive ministry?" *One word of advice: Do not underestimate the power of God to change lives despite your weakness, whatever that weakness may be!* Interestingly, Scripture teaches that dynamic power can be found through human weakness. The apostle Paul, who demonstrated the ability to heal as a part of his ministry calling, prayed fervently for a "thorn in the flesh" to go away. Was it an illness? A physical handicap or fear of some sort? We do not know. Regardless, the Lord did not grant the healing of this "affliction" and responded by saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). In the same way that Paul learned to accept his "thorn in the flesh," those who tremble when they speak may have to accept such a humbling challenge as a way through which God chooses to demonstrate His life-changing power.

Overall, my belief is that the Lord can help you to manage or overcome the fear of public speaking. The problem is common. In fact, it is healthy when properly understood. When a ministry calling feels overwhelming, the fear of the Lord can bring valuable perspective and equip even the most timid to face the most seemingly impossible tasks. And when you respond to God's calling(s), your fear is made irrelevant by the dynamic power of His message. No, you may never fully overcome the fear of public speaking. However, do not underestimate God's power to change hearts and lives through even your greatest perceived weakness. As you continue to mature in your faith,

by the grace of God, may you be given the boldness to cry out with dry mouth and

trembling voice, "Here I am Lord, send me!"

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1) Would you consider any form of public speaking to be a weakness? (Large group, impromptu speech, new environments, etc.) If so, how?
2) In what ways have you prayed for weak areas in your life? How has God responded to these prayer requests?

GROUP QUESTIONS

1) Would you agree that boldness and fear can co-exist?
2) Overall, what aspect of this booklet has spoken to you the most?
3) What tangible step can you take in moving forward in boldness?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Armerding, Hudson T. (1992). *The heart of Godly leadership.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Arnold, Carrol C. (2007). Oral rhetoric, rhetoric, and literature. *Philosophy and Rhetoric,* 40(1), 170-187.

Bartow, Charles L. (1995). *The preaching moment: A guide to sermon delivery.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Beebe, Steven A. and Susan J. Beebe. (1991). *Public speaking: An audience-central approach*, 1st ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Blanchard, Ken and Phil Hodges. (2008). *Lead like Jesus.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Book of Confessions: Study edition. (1996). Louisville, KY: Geneva Press.

Brewer, Geoffrey. (2001). *Snakes top lists of Americans' fears.* Retrieved from gallup.com/poll/1891/Snakes-Top-List-Americans-Dears.aspx

Carnegie, Dale. (1962). *The quick & easy way to effective speaking.* New York: Pocket Books.

———. (2011). *How to develop self-confidence and influence people by public speaking.* New York: Pocket Books.

Childers, Jana and Clayton J. Schmidt, eds. (2008). *Performance in preaching.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker .

Daly, John A., James C. McCroskey, Joe Ayres, Tim Hopf, Debbie M. Ayres, Sonandre and Tanichya K. Wongprasert, eds. (2009). *Avoiding communication,* 3rd ed. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Elwell, Walter A. (2001). *Evangelical dictionary of theology.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Erickson, Millard J. (1996). *Christian theology.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Esposito, Janet E. (2000). *In the spotlight.* Bridgewater: In the Spotlight, LLC.

Grice, George L. and John F. Skinner. (2010). *Mastering public speaking,* 7th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Guinness, Os. (2003). *The call.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Kaiser, Walter C. Jr. (1991). *Toward an Old Testament theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Keller, Timothy. (2012). *Every good endeavor.* New York: Riverhead Books.

Kerr, Hugh T., ed. (1989). *Calvin's Institutes.* Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Laskowski, Lenny. (2001). *10 Days to more confident public speaking*. New York: Grand Central Publishing.

———. (2012). *The proven, stress-free way to successful public speaking*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Litfin, Duane. (1992). *Public Speaking: A handbook for Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Lucado, Max. (2012). *Fearless: Imagine your life without fear*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Lucas, Stephen E. (2009). *The art of public speaking,* 10th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

McDill, Wayne V. (1999). *The moment of truth.* Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group.

McFarland, Kenneth. (1961). *Eloquence in public speaking*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Mills, Jack and Larry A. Samovar. (1986). *Oral communication: Message and response.* Dubuque, IA: WCB.

Monarth, Harrison and Larina Kase. (2007). *The confident speaker*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Mounce, William D. (2006). *Mounce's complete expository dictionary of Old & New Testament words.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Naistadt, Ivy. (2004). *Speak without fear*. New York: Harper Collins.

Ortberg, John. (2009). *The me I want to be*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Packer, J.I. *Knowing God.* (1993). Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

Phelps, Arthur Stevens. (1958). *Speaking in public*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Richards, Lawrence O. (1991). *Encyclopedia of Biblical words.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Richmond, Virginia P., Jason S. Wrench, and James C. McCroskey. (2013). *Communication apprehension, avoidance, and effectiveness,* 6th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Robinson, Haddon W. (2001). *Biblical preaching,* 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Stanley, Andy. (2006). *Next generation leader.* Sisters, OR: Multnomah.

Stott, John. (1982). *Between two worlds.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

————. *Basic Christian leadership: Biblical models of church, gospel, and ministry.* Nottingham, UK: Inter-varsity.

Tack, Alfred. (1973). *How to speak well in public.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Wallechinsky, David, Irving Wallace, and Amy Wallace. (1977). *The people's almanac presents the book of lists.* New York: William Morrow.

White, James Emery. (2003). *Rethinking the Church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Willimon, William H. (2000). *Calling & character.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Yogis, Jaimal. (2013). *The fear project: What our most primal emotion taught me about survival, success, surfing, and love.* New York: Rodale.

VITA

Name: David F. Rockness

Place of Birth: Grand Haven, Michigan

Date of Birth: 27 May 1970

EDUCATION

B.A. (History), Wheaton College (Wheaton, Illinois)

M.Div., Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (South Hamilton, Massachusetts)

D.Min. (Study to Pulpit), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

(South Hamilton, Massachusetts)

Period of Studies: January 2011-May 2016

Expected Graduation: May 2016